

THE VENERABLE

Margaret Bourgeoys



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THE VENERABLE MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS  
FOUNDRESS OF THE "CONGRÉGATION DE NOTRE DAME DE MONTREAL"







The Life and Times  
of  
Margaret Bourgeoys.



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CONGREGATION DE NOTRE DAME,  
of Montreal.

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The Life and Times  
OF  
**Margaret Bourgeoys**  
(THE VENERABLE)

By  
Margaret Mary Drummond



Revised, with Preface by  
Rev. Lewis Drummond, S.J.

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MONTREAL, August the 4th, 1906.

REVEREND MOTHER ST. ANACLET,

SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE

CONGREGATION OF NOTRE DAME.

DEAR REVEREND MOTHER,

I thought that I had already a fairly good knowledge of the events and the personages that make up the early history of Canada. But this life of the Venerable Mother Bourgeoys is a new revelation to me. From the first to the last of its delightful pages the mind is filled with wonder at the admirable ways in which Divine Providence leads the truly apostolic soul of this saintly virgin to the full development of her great work for religion and humanity. The generous and constant fidelity of the Venerable Marguerite Bourgeoys to the will of God, her courage and her fortitude, adorned by modesty, gentleness and serenity in the midst of bitter trials and disappointments, present a fascinating portrayal of a true servant of God.

The gifted authoress of this life of your Foundress has conferred a favor upon our Catholic people by producing this truly admirable book. The remarkable skill with which she has interwoven with the life of her heroine the most beautiful and thrilling

incidents of the history of this city of Mary, gives additional value to her work. I hope this charming book will be extensively read, especially by our young people, who will find in it a glorious record of the sterling virtues of their ancestors and an antidote to the baneful literature of the day.

Personally, I welcome this new tribute to the exalted virtues of the Venerable Marguerite Bourgeoys in the hope that it may hasten the accomplishment of an event for which, as you know, I have prayed and laboured in my humble way, the placing of her name among the canonized saints of the Church.

I remain, dear Reverend Mother,

Yours devotedly in Christ,

PAUL, ARCH. OF MONTREAL.



WITH LOVING HOMAGE  
TO  
MARY IMMACULATE  
AND  
IN GRATITUDE TO THE  
FIRST TEACHER OF VILLE-MARIE  
MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS  
DECLARED VENERABLE  
BY  
HIS HOLINESS LEO XIII.  
DECEMBER 7, 1878,  
THIS TRUTHFUL STORY OF HER LIFE IS OFFERED  
TO THE  
PUPILS PAST AND PRESENT  
BY ONE  
OF HER OWN  
CONGREGATION DE NOTRE-DAME.



## PREFACE

THE biography here presented to the public is one that ought to interest all Catholics. The Venerable Margaret Bourgeoys is revealed to us as a valiant woman with a well-balanced mind, an extraordinary but quiet force of character, an energizing faith, a deep humility and a burning love of God and of her neighbor.

For Canadians especially this life is full of interest. Margaret Bourgeoys, though she little dreamt of any such distinction, is one of the heroic figures that contributed most to the making of what is best in our Dominion. Her early association with the work of that knightly and fearless man of God, Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, throws into strong relief the inflexible sense of duty and the ardent zeal which made these two pioneers of Catholicism in Montreal models for all succeeding generations. The dauntless soldier stays by an apparently forlorn hope in an outpost of extreme peril, and when the jealous Governor-General orders him back to France, he accepts the capricious command as a manifestation of God's will, and ends his days in saintly obscurity. Margaret, on the contrary, is allowed to build up the character of the sorely tried, slowly growing colony, and lives on for nearly eighty years

to behold her life's work prospering in spite of many heart-piercing vicissitudes. In both we have the same purity of intention, tested in the one by seeming failure but real, everlasting success before God, and in the other by unflagging constancy in overcoming obstacles from without and within, from above and below.

This life shows a combination, usual only in the lives of great saints, of providential guidance with personal effort, of sustained singleness of human purpose with absolute conformity to the Divine will, of self-diffidence the most utter with courage the most heroic. One has only to read the following pages with an open mind to marvel at the wondrous way in which Margaret Bourgeoys was guided by an all-ordering Providence into the great work of her life, and to admire the promptness with which she seized on every intimation of God's wishes. From the early age of twelve, circumstances introduced her to the responsibility and devotedness of that teaching profession which was to be her life-long passion. As soon as she had grown to full womanhood, the precocious piety of her childhood developed into a longing for the contemplative life. She tried to be a Carmelite, but was not accepted. The Holy Ghost often breathes such ineffectual yearnings into the souls of those whom He destines to a life of great activity, in order that they may be rooted and confirmed in prayerful union with Him and thus ever preserve, amid the cares and

distractions of their busy lives, the deepest interior recollection.

Of personal effort and ready response to the call of divinely prepared opportunity these pages are full. Read how Margaret grasps at the providential offer of M. de Maisonneuve and promptly affronts the dangers of a journey to Montreal and a permanent sojourn there, when the plain risk was death at the hands of pitiless savages; how thrice again, at different times, she braves the terrible hardships then attendant upon a double crossing of the Atlantic in poverty the most dire; how her daily self-inflicted mortification, superadded to actual want, is the wonder of her companions; how even at the age of sixty-nine she walks one hundred and eighty miles in the deep snow to confer with the Bishop of Quebec on an undertaking which he had proposed to her.

The one purpose of her mature years was the establishment of a teaching order of uncloistered women. At that time this was a thoroughly new departure. Hitherto all the training of girls had been confided to cloistered nuns exclusively, simply because all communities of religious women were then bound to strict enclosure. As late as the second decade of the seventeenth century St. Francis de Sales, although himself such a living embodiment of perfection in the common life, insisted upon enclosure, which St. Jane Frances de Chantal, the co-foundress of the Visitation Order, at first wished to dispense with. And in Margaret's time Mary

Ward's disheartening difficulty in securing approval for her own uncloistered order of women must have been fresh in the minds of many. So it is no wonder that Margaret Bourgeoys had respectfully to withstand the urgent proposals of two successive Bishops of Quebec that she should incorporate her congregation into the Ursuline Order. Both these well meant efforts were made at most trying moments of her life, the first by Mgr. de Laval just after the destruction of her convent by fire, when her Sisters were in complete destitution, and the second by Mgr. de Saint-Vallier, when Margaret was enfeebled by age. But in both cases her quiet remonstrances in favor of her special work convinced these zealous prelates that she was really carrying out the designs of God.

Margaret's mistrust of herself in spite of the great things she had accomplished is the strongest proof of her humility. Twice did she urge upon her nuns her own incapacity and the advantage it would be for them to elect another Superior, and twice the only possible successor was removed by death; so that Margaret had on each occasion to take up her burden once more. But this saintly diffidence of self was coupled with the highest moral courage. Of this, besides the examples already mentioned, one of the most striking instances is her refusal to accept an endowment that would have ensured the future of her community and that was offered to her at the beginning of her great enterprise. Only those who have experienced the pinchings of poverty can realize

what courageous trust in God this refusal implies. She feared that the assured possession of a competency would endanger the spirit of religious poverty which she felt to be the bulwark of the religious life, and this fear made her heroically brave to trust the Divine promises.

Humdrum and plain, hidden and humble though Margaret's daily life was, it moved in an atmosphere of virtue so exalted as to seem unreal to those who "perceive not these things that are of the spirit of God." It is well, therefore, to let it be seen that hers is not a solitary instance in the Canadian life of the time. Hence the opportuneness of devoting special chapters to what otherwise might seem digressions, such as the Dollard episode and the lives of Catherine Tegakwitha and Jeanne LeBer. There were spiritual giants in those days. The whole country was saturated with the Catholic faith in all its purity, without the slightest admixture of religious error, and so it seems almost natural that Canada in the period of its doctrinal integrity should have produced such a woman as Margaret Bourgeoys, matter-of-fact and yet enthusiastic, gently ruling everybody about her for more than forty years and yet ending her days in glad obscurity, building up with great labor a permanent order of devoted women and yet sacrificing her own life to prolong that of another.

LEWIS DRUMMOND, S. J.

St. Boniface, Manitoba.

January 26, 1907.





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## CHAPTER I.

TROYES — THE BOURGEOYS FAMILY — MARGARET'S  
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YOUTH — THE POWER OF A LOOK.

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**I**N the earlier years of the seventeenth century, while Louis XIII. was reigning over France, and James I, the stern enemy of both Catholics and Puritans, sat on the English throne, a fierce blast of intense religious feeling swept over both countries. Minds were uprooted from their common interests and ordinary cares, hearts were stirred by a lasting enthusiasm — but how widely the cause and object differed in either country!

The Puritans, cruelly persecuted by the English king, longed only for liberty to practise their own stern principles. They had vainly sought this freedom in Holland, and they now hoped to find it in a new country, where kings were quite unknown. When the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth on the 6th of September, 1620, it bore towards America a party of austere and gloomy men who asked nothing from their new home beyond the right to believe what they chose and live as they pleased. Both before

and after this date, French men and women set out for the same distant continent. They went, not to seek liberty or peace, but to encounter toil, privation, and danger in an uncivilized country. They left a dearly-loved land, where their lives were secure, not a country whose persecutions drove them away. Their aim was not to live in a strange land according to beliefs scorned in their own, but rather to share a cherished faith with wretched souls dwelling in the darkness of ignorance and idolatry.

Tales of missionary toils, of souls saved, of lives sacrificed for the glory of God, came back to the Mother country, kindled the flames of apostolic zeal in generous hearts, and thus prepared new laborers for the vineyard. When little French children of that time, who had at least one taste in common with those of to-day, asked for a "story," their mothers would tell them of a strange, far-away country called Canada, and of holy men who were trying to teach Catechism to wild, red-skinned people called Indians. These poor creatures knew nothing about God or Heaven, or the dear little Infant Jesus. They were as ignorant as the untamed animals that roamed through the gloomy Canadian forests. So, we may be right in thinking that such thrilling narratives had some influence upon the little child born at Troyes, nearly five months before the Pilgrim Fathers sailed from Plymouth, and more than five years after the arrival of the first Recollet missionaries in Canada.

Like the latter, she was destined to leave home and kindred, to give up all the comforts and pleasures of life in order to labor in a newly-founded settlement for the glory of God.

This Troyes, dear to us because of Margaret Bourgeoys, is by no means an insignificant town. It has a stirring history, from the far-off time when, under the name of Augustobona, it belonged to an old Roman province, till the third century, when it first received the light of faith; on through the stormy fifth century when it was saved from the ravages of Attila by its holy bishop, Lupus, until the twelfth, when its fame was increased by two of its sons, Chrétien, the Trouvère, and Thibault IV., the Crusader. In 1420, (just two centuries before our heroine's birth), Isabeaude Bavière signed within its walls the Treaty by which the fair realm of France was given to an English king. In 1429, Charles the VII. reconquered it, and since that day Troyes has witnessed many other scenes of strife and bloodshed.

Not warriors, not poets only, were born in the quaint old town, with its narrow, winding streets, pretty boulevards, wooden houses and splendid Gothic churches. Urban IV., a pontiff whose chief title to honor is the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi, claimed Troyes as his birthplace. The waters of the Seine flow past the picturesque and historic town; that Seine, which, not many miles to the

north, also passes through the famous city where toils the eager mind and throbs the uneasy heart of France.

So, on the 17th of April, 1620, while Catholics were celebrating the day of our Saviour's death, Margaret Bourgeoys began a life that was to leave its mark upon a distant land; a life whose busiest years were to be spent on the shores of another great river, more grandly beautiful than the Seine, if less rich in glorious memories. On the same day the little child was admitted by Baptism into the Church. This initial event of her Christian life took place in the old church dedicated to St. John, still one of the finest in Troyes.

Of the early years of this life we know but little. None of those charming little anecdotes of childish days, so lovingly dwelt upon by the biographers of other great men and women, has come down to us. This much we do know — Margaret's parents, Abraham Bourgeoys and Guillemette Garnier were but moderately endowed with worldly goods. The former was a tradesman, honest and hard-working; the latter, a gentle, loving woman, earnest and prudent, faithful to every duty of wifehood and motherhood, and ever "seeking first the Kingdom of God and its justice." Their reward, in this life, was a peaceful, happy home, brightened by the presence of five children. We are told that like many of God's chosen saints, Margaret gave early proofs of a remarkable inclination to piety and holiness. Fervent



in prayer, docile, kind and unselfish, the child seemed to turn naturally to humility and mortification. The peace promised to the "meek and humble of heart" must have been her share all through life, from its dawn to its close. Grace worked swiftly and easily in her rarely gifted nature; an ardent soul, a loving heart, a strong will, a mind in which unusual intelligence yielded prompt obedience to calm reason and unfailing prudence — what better soil could be found for the growth of virtue!

If, some ten years after Margaret's birth, we had entered the Bourgeoys' homestead, we should often have seen a pretty picture. In a simply furnished room, seven or eight little girls are gathered round a child of their own age. Some are sewing, one is dressing a little altar, all seem to be listening intently to the serious little maiden, who plays the part of teacher, while they readily accept that of submissive pupils. This central figure has something very uncommon about it; the sweet face is so earnest; the clear, calm eyes have such a steady light in them; the gentle voice conveys such an impression of strength and energy. Margaret is telling of her plans for the future, that future which seems so very distant to these little ones who have taken only a few steps in the path of life. She has brought her friends together for prayer and work and play, for she feels that anything done in common has more value than when achieved alone. Perhaps our Lord's promise

to be in the midst of two or three gathered together in His name inspired the child with this idea, for she had never seen anything in the way of a sodality for girls. Her projects for after life are not the result of dreams in which wealth or pleasure play the principal part; her ideal of happiness is to do good to others, to win souls to God, though the manner and the means be but dimly outlined in her childish mind.

Sorrow purifies and strengthens noble hearts, so its influence could not be lacking in Margaret's life. She was only twelve when her mother died, and yet, after this great trial, a heavy load of responsibility was laid upon her shoulders, still very weak for so heavy a burden.

Abraham Bourgeoys, seeing in his little daughter's character so much strength and wisdom, chose her to replace the mother whom God had taken from his once happy home. A younger brother and sister were confided to Margaret's tuition, and thus this child of twelve, in addition to the new duties of a housewife, had to assume the higher and more serious ones of a teacher. We can imagine how carefully the little housekeeper did each daily task, anxious only for the comfort of others, and never sparing herself or shirking any duty.

So Margaret passed from childhood to youth, leading a simple, earnest, well-filled life, of whose labors

or virtues she has left no record, save humble lamentations over some slight faults caused by an inclination to vanity. But Sister Bourgeoys probably exaggerates the guilt of her desire, so natural to youth, to be as well dressed as others; to her pure and lowly mind this imperfection seems a real sin.

Like Saint Teresa in her girlish days, Margaret was still held captive by some earthly bonds, but God willed that these should be broken, and broken through Mary's intervention.

This day of signal grace dawned for our heroine with the first Sunday of October, 1640, when the Dominicans of Troyes celebrated the Feast of the Rosary by a solemn procession. As it wound through the narrow streets of the ancient town, the sweet sound of hymns sung by fresh young voices rose and fell upon the cool autumn winds. The long cortège, with its gay banners waving to and fro, neared the picturesque old Abbey of Notre Dame-aux-Nonnains, and Margaret, who had fallen into the ranks some time before, raised her eyes in loving reverence, to the stone statue of the Blessed Virgin surmounting the massive gate. At that moment, the figure of Our Lady seemed radiant with a celestial beauty unnoticed by Margaret until then, and invisible to all others. The heavenly face bent upon the startled girl a look of unutterable tenderness, a look which filled her heart with contempt for all earthly things. The procession moved on, Margaret

went with it, nothing in her appearance revealing the wonderful change that one short moment had wrought in her soul.

In her memoirs, written years afterwards by order of her confessor, Margaret says: "The impression received on that occasion so touched and transformed me, that I no longer knew myself, and the change in me was soon apparent to all . . . from that moment I gave up every amusement, retired from the world and dedicated my life to the service of God." Henceforth, vanity and love of dress having lost their hold upon her, Margaret wore the simplest attire, of a dark color, and prepared to suffer continual humiliations, for which, as we shall see, she seemed to thirst until her life's end.

## CHAPTER II.

OUR LADY'S SODALITY — MARGARET AS A SODALIST — ALL FOR GOD — SEEKING THE LIGHT — DISAPPOINTMENT — A PARTING — HEAVENLY CONSOLATION — A VISION.

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A SODALITY for young girls had been recently affiliated to the Congregation de Notre Dame, founded by Blessed Peter Fourier in 1628. Its members were young girls who met on Sundays and Holydays, their aim being to serve God by prayer, and their neighbor by acts of kindness and charity. Several members of this Sodality knew Margaret, and seeing her goodness and piety, wished her to join them. Until now, she had always refused, not only because she feared ridicule, but also because a lingering fondness for dress kept her from joining a society whose rules forbade anything in the way of finery or useless ornament. Now, however, that glance from the radiant statue of the old Abbey-Church marked the turning point of her career, and the imperfection which most people hardly recognize as such when they call it love of dress fell from her soul as dust from the wind-shaken lily-leaf. It had gone no deeper than the surface, it had merely

dimmed the pure brightness of her girlish heart, but Our Lord could not suffer even a flaw in one He had chosen to be His and His alone.

Having purified her soul from its slight stain by a fervent confession, Margaret was admitted into the Sodality and soon edified all by her humility, charity and wonderful spirit of self-sacrifice. This gentle, unselfish holiness endeared her to every one, and, at the first elections following her admission, she was chosen President. So faithfully did she discharge her new duties that only her departure for Canada twelve years later, could induce the Sodality to give her place to another.

A tender devotion to our Lady was the source whence Margaret derived those virtues which, leading her ever higher on the upward path, drew others upward also by the sweetly constraining force of good example. This devotion took the form of a constant endeavor to imitate the Blessed Virgin's virtues and to unite with her intentions in every action. This practice Margaret afterwards recommended often and urgently to her spiritual daughters.

Margaret's leisure hours during this period of her life were devoted to all sorts of charitable labors. How often she went into poor and sorrow-darkened houses, bringing with her help and consolation! How often she took her place beside weak and fretful sufferers, tending them with loving hands, her very presence seeming to lighten their pain and fill their

hearts with fresh courage! How often the sound of her sweet voice, speaking with irresistible eloquence of God's merciful love, brought back peace and hope to some poor soul trembling on the brink of eternity!

While thus lavishing upon others her never-failing kindness and compassion, Margaret asked nothing for herself, but joyfully received all trials and humiliations. As her heart became more closely united to God through Mary, she conceived a great wish to leave the world and serve her Lord more perfectly. After praying earnestly, thinking seriously, and humbly seeking advice, Margaret determined to enter the Carmelite Order. As devotion to Our Lady and love of mortification were so deeply rooted in her heart, it seemed quite natural that she should serve God in silence, holiness and austere penance, in one of the Blessed Virgin's most privileged orders.

Abraham Bourgeois, at first, surprised and grieved by her desire to leave him in his lonely old age, at last, with touching resignation, made up his mind to let her follow God's call. But, when the young girl made her humble request for admission into the novitiate, the daughters of Saint Teresa, unconsciously obeying in this the will of God, kindly, yet firmly, rejected her petition. Although this refusal was a great sorrow to Margaret, no anger or irritation disturbed her peace of heart.

Seeking only to discover the designs of Providence, she then knocked at the lonely convent of the Poor

Clares; for here, too, penance and solitude would be her lot. She was met by another bitter disappointment; like the Carmelites, the daughters of Saint Clare refused to admit her.

Grieved, but not discouraged, she now resolved to seek perfection in the world. Having waited some time in obedience to her confessor's advice, she made a vow of perpetual chastity on December 21, 1643, just one year after the foundation of Ville-Marie, whither her unsuspected vocation was soon to lead her. A little later she made a vow of poverty.

About this time Father Gendret, a zealous priest whom Margaret had chosen as her confessor, sought to found a teaching community, whose object was to honor the missionary life of Our Blessed Lady, and her zeal for the Infant Church, after her Son's Ascension.

The new institution was confided to Margaret's care. But the plan was doomed to failure. God had other things in store for her. Subsequent events not only proved this clearly, but also inflicted new grief upon our heroine, who had thought to find, at last, her own special sphere of action.

After all these trials, a great loss saddened Margaret's life. It was the death of her loving father. After caring for him most tenderly during his long illness, and praying by his side during his agony, she sadly closed his eyes. Then, unwilling to let stranger hands touch his lifeless body, she prepared it for



burial. It would seem as if this action, prompted by her tender affection, was rewarded by an increase of love for her neighbor. From this day Margaret added to her other good works the truly Christian custom of laying out the dead.

Were we to consider only the outward circumstances of Margaret's life at this period, we should think it very gloomy and desolate. Fatherless and motherless, crushed by one disappointment after another, longing to do God's will, and unable to discover His designs upon her, surely she must be leading a wretched life. But in reality, Our Lord amply repaid her for the bitterest trials. Of her, the words of the Gospel are indeed true: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." More than once, the Divine Consoler, entering her heart by Holy Communion, filled her with so fervent a love and so great a joy that she could scarcely repress some outward sign of her inward happiness.

But a more signal favor was soon to be hers. The fifteenth day of August, 1650, was to be one of the most memorable dates in Margaret's life. It would seem as if, in order to attach her even more to the service of Mary, our Lord chose His Blessed Mother's feasts to enrich her with most wonderful favors. This day, on which the Church celebrates Our Lady's glorious entrance into her Son's heavenly kingdom, was marked by the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and by a solemn procession in honor of the

Queen of Heaven. While this procession was passing along the streets, catching on its banners the shafts of the midsummer sun, a few chosen souls knelt before their Lord in the quiet church. What a contrast between the cool dimness of the Gothic temple, where the light fell in softened beams through the pointed windows, and the dazzling sunshine in the streets without! Yet there was a brightness within, too, for many tapers glowed upon the altar, where the warm-tinted summer flowers were giving their last breath to adorn a humble throne. Above flowers and lights, the King Himself, from His tiny golden prison, looked down upon the worshippers below. Margaret was kneeling there, her kind hands now folded, her head bowed, her whole attitude expressive of humble adoration. Suddenly, she lifted her eyes, and fixed them lovingly upon the Sacred Host. Then Our Lord deigned to favor her with a gracious vision; instead of the Host, she saw, smiling down upon her, a little child whose celestial beauty filled her heart with joy and peace. What passed within her as, blind and deaf to all earthly things, she gazed upon the great God of Heaven, revealing Himself in so sweet and gentle a form? We cannot tell, for God's work in a soul is ever as silent as it is swift and powerful. The task begun by Our Dear Lady was now completed by her Divine Son. A look from the Mother had once broken the bonds of vanity; a

glance from the Son infused into Margaret's heart an utter disgust for the allurements of the world. Henceforth, Sister Margaret lived upon earth as an angel might, using the necessities of life reluctantly, indifferent to all earthly delights, her thoughts and her desires dwelling ever in Heaven.

This complete detachment of heart and mind had been brought about by God's grace, in order to fit her for the fulfilment of the mysterious designs which her departure for Canada was soon to make known. These progressive victories of grace in a soul already so holy are an encouragement to us all, for they teach that though the Saints may have had faults like ours, yet they became Saints, not all at once, but by dint of prayer and conflict, for, says the Imitation: "The old custom will stand in thy way but by a better custom it shall be overcome." (Book III. Chap. XII.)

### CHAPTER III.

OUR LADY'S KNIGHT — LA "FOLLE ENTREPRISE"—  
BACK TO FRANCE — SEEN IN SLEEP — WHAT  
CAME OF A DREAM — LIGHT AT LAST — HESITA-  
TION — "GO, I SHALL BE WITH YOU!"

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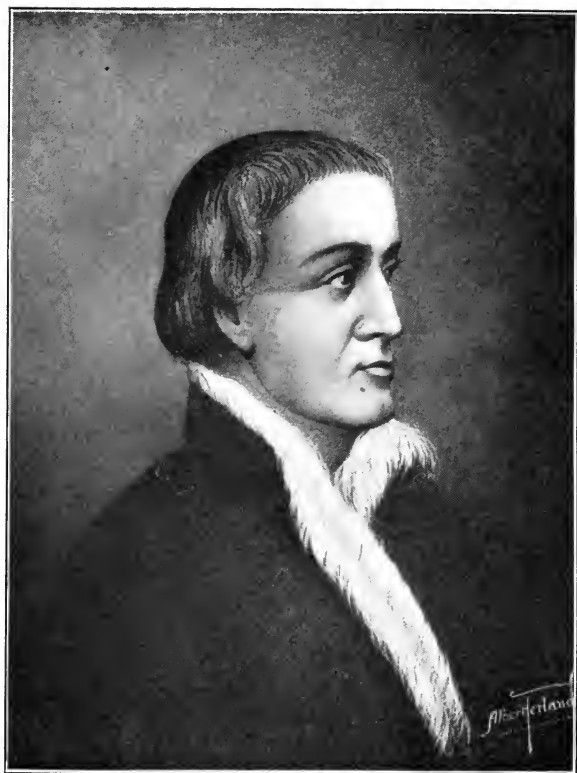
STRANGE circumstances were to bring Margaret Bourgeoys into close contact with one of the most striking characters in a singularly varied and interesting page of history. It will perhaps not come amiss to speak here of this man—Paul Chomedy de Maisonneuve—with whom Margaret was to co-operate in a great and perilous work.

"De Maisonneuve was a great man, knightly in bearing, brave as a lion and devout as a monk."\* There words excellently portray this man, in whom tender piety, far-seeing prudence and indomitable energy were blended in so rare a degree. Little is known of him before his providential appearance as leader of the colony sent out to Canada by the Montreal Company.† Of his childhood only one glimpse

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\* Picturesque Canada.

† The Montreal Company was an Association of thirty-five men of wealth and influence, formed to establish a colony on the island of Montreal, and to build there a city called Ville-Marie which should be consecrated to the Blessed Virgin.



PAUL DE CHOMEDEY SIEUR LE MAISONNEUVE  
FOUNDER AND FIRST GOVERNOR OF MONTREAL



is given; at the age of thirteen he heads a regiment on a battle-field in Holland, but that one glimpse reveals his whole character. He seemed born to fight and to command. His courage was both moral and physical, drawing all its strength from love of God and of His Blessed Mother. He well deserved to be called "One of the knights of the Queen of Angels."

Brave soldier and strenuous worker though he was, he found time every day to say his beads and recite the Little Office. As a mere boy, in an effeminate and pleasure-loving environment, he bore his soul untainted through all the temptations of camp life. In later years, as in youth, neither argument nor opposition could induce him to deviate in the least from the line of clear duty. So, when entrusted, in 1641, with the mission of founding, in the then most dangerous spot in Canada, a settlement in honor of the Blessed Virgin, nothing could persuade him to give up or even alter the plans entrusted to him. To the reproaches and expostulations with which he was met in Quebec, he simply replied: "I have not come here

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A part of the Island was sold to the Company by the 100 Associates in 1646, on the condition that a settlement be formed there. The Company held its powers directly from the King; it received a charter and was allowed the privilege of a Governor for the island.

In 1655, the entire island became the property of the Montreal Company, and on its dissolution, it was purchased by the Sulpicians.

to deliberate, but to act. It is my duty and my honor to found a colony at Montreal; and I would go if every tree were an Iroquois.”\*

A weaker or a less prudent man would have inevitably failed in the “crazy undertaking,” “la folle entreprise,” as it was then styled, and with him would have perished the whole colony of New France. But the indomitable pluck of de Maisonneuve held one little battered outpost, year after year, against the whole brunt of Iroquois war, and thus protected the lives and property of those behind him.

At last, however, the garrison dwindled to almost nothing, and even the brave Governor deemed further resistance almost useless. As a last resource, he determined to go himself to France, to ask for more men and funds. If he could not obtain at least a hundred men, he was to write and order the evacuation of Ville-Marie.

De Maisonneuve had two sisters living in Troyes; one, Madame de Chuly, with whom Margaret lived for some time after her father's death; the other, a religious in the Convent of the Congregation de Notre Dame. This sister, Sœur Louise de Ste. Marie, was the confidant of all de Maisonneuve's plans. She had ever prayed fervently for him; she it was who had urged his devoting himself to the cause of France in the New World. Previous to his leaving

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\* Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*. (Boston, LITTLE BROWN & CO., 1868), p 203.



for Canada, she had given him a picture of Our Lady, around which, with artless faith, were traced the words:

“Mother of God, on thy true heart we call,  
Grant us a place in thy Montreal.”

For all the nuns were inflamed with a zeal akin to that of de Maisonneuve. They yearned to dare all perils and spend their lives in the effort to convert the pagan tribes of America. Let us not forget that this was the first and foremost intention of the founders of Montreal, and, though it may have been lost sight of later, it was never forgotten by the pioneers of Ville-Marie. Scarce knowing what was to be his life in the future, or what that of his followers in the distant land of their dreams, de Maisonneuve promised to come back for the sisters when a little settlement would have arisen.

However, the ardent nuns were doomed to disappointment. Ten years later, de Maisonneuve, somewhat worn by his hand-to-hand struggle with death in many a shape, but a truer knight and a truer saint than ever, came back to France for help. Having, with much trouble gathered together one hundred and eight able-bodied men, most of them laborers or artisans, he was nearly ready for the return trip. As was his custom, he came to take leave of his sisters in Troyes. Sœur Louise de Sainte Marie and her companions reminded him of the half promise he had made them. Had not the time come for Sœur Louise

and three or four of her nuns to go with him to help evangelize Montreal? De Maisonneuve now knew better the requirements of his sorely tried colony. He told them that, for the present, the foundation of a cloistered convent was quite out of the question. But they had dreamt so long of Ville-Marie — it seemed to have become their own; and they pleaded with him, urging that whatever work there might be outside the cloister could be done by the Sister Prefect of their young girls' sodality, whose talents and sterling qualities would prove of inestimable worth to the colony. They had sometimes spoken to this person of their cherished plans and asked her if she would not like to go with them to Canada. She had always replied that nothing would give her greater pleasure, provided it were the will of God. They praised this young girl so warmly that de Maisonneuve grew curious, and asked if he might be allowed to see her. Margaret Bourgeoys, whose home was probably near the convent, was at once sent for.

De Maisonneuve had been waiting only a few minutes when a very simply dressed young woman came into the room with light, quick step. She was of about medium height, her face was firm and kind, with clear dark eyes under a singularly broad and calm brow. She looked at de Maisonneuve, as Sœur Louise was about to speak, and suddenly an expression of astonished recognition overspread her

face. Throwing up her hands, she exclaimed: "Here is my priest! Here is he whom I saw in my dreams!"

Thoroughly perplexed and surprised, de Maisonneuve and the nuns begged her to explain the meaning of this singular outburst. Margaret hesitated, then, with a directness that characterized her, told them that a few days previous she had had a most vivid dream, which had returned once and once again. Each time she had seen a venerable man dressed in a sober, half-clerical garb, like that commonly worn by priests when travelling. The features of this man, though seen for the first time, remained impressed on her mind, while the firm conviction was forced upon her that one day she would meet this stranger and find in him a co-laborer in the harvesting of God's glory. Now, the face she had seen three times in her sleep, was unmistakably that of M. de Maisonneuve.

Sister Bourgeoys' dream and her recognition of the Governor of Montreal were at first deemed nothing more than amusing coincidences, but subsequent events were to prove them the means employed by God to make known His Holy Will.

That God does often make use of dreams to reveal His designs upon chosen souls may be proved by many examples recorded in the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the Saints. For instance, we read in the wonderful life of St. Francis Xavier that it was by a

dream he learnt his vocation to the Indies. So was it to be with Margaret Bourgeoys.

De Maisonneuve, like the great captain he was, at once perceived the rare, strong qualities that underlay the modest appearance of the young and inexperienced woman before him. Here was one who could be relied upon, one who would be ready for any emergency. Few words had been spoken before he came to the point with soldierly abruptness. "Would you be willing," he said, "to go to Montreal and to open there a school for children?" Margaret, who on her side felt an instinctive respect and esteem for de Maisonneuve, replied at once: "If my Superiors approve, I will go joyfully and consecrate my life to the service of God and my neighbor in that distant land."

When Sister Margaret pronounced these words she knew that she was very possibly going to martyrdom — she knew that she was going to be alone to bear all the weariness of teaching children whose language was first to be acquired; and that afterwards, should the cruel Iroquois make a successful raid into the little Christian settlement, she would probably be burnt alive. Her ready acceptance of such possibilities was nothing short of heroic.

De Maisonneuve was much pleased with the unforeseen result of his visit to the convent. He had found one school teacher and no more would be wanted for many years to come. There were as yet

very few French children in Ville-Marie, and those few were still too young to immediately require a teacher, but there was need of somebody to care for the children of Indian converts and to help Jeanne Mance\* in the performance of her gentle, womanly ministrations.

Margaret had accepted, but conditionally. In such an important matter she would not trust to her own impulse, but humbly sought advice from those who could give it best. A few days were spent in earnest deliberation and prayer. Mature thought could only show more clearly the insurmountable difficulties that beset the undertaking. She was poor and had no natural protectors; New France was threatened with total destruction; the journey was long and dangerous, and she would have to undertake it alone with rough men. At this thought even Margaret grew afraid.

Something above human wisdom and prudence must have inspired Father Gendret, Margaret's confessor, to approve most strongly her apparently rash and hasty decision. He urged his now sorely-perplexed penitent to go on without doubt or hesitation, for God's Providence had at last revealed her life-work. In Canada, and at Ville-Marie, he foretold,

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\* Jeane Mance, foundress of the Hotel-Dieu, the first hospital of Ville-Marie. She was present at the foundation of Maisonneuve's colony in 1642, and from that time forth, devoted herself to the sick and the wounded.

she would permanently establish the Community, the foundation of which they had striven in vain to lay in the soil of Troyes.

"But I am quite alone," said Margaret; "how shall I found a Community?"

"Your Guardian Angel," counted Father Gendret, "mine, and you; that makes three already."

"But there is no woman to go with me," she replied, "and how can I go alone with an unknown gentleman?"

"Put your whole trust in M. de Maisonneuve's protection, as you would in that of one of the first knights of the Queen of Angels."

These brave, kind words somewhat reassured Margaret, but her pure soul was to be flooded with such consolation as no human voice could give. What happened at this trying juncture let us tell in her own earnest, simple words, as written down years afterwards:

"One morning, when thoroughly awake, I saw before me a tall lady, clothed in a robe of white serge-like material, who said, 'Go, and I will never abandon thee.' And I knew that it was Our dear Lady, although I did not see her face. This reassured me for the journey and gave me a great deal of courage. Nothing, indeed, now seemed difficult, although I was on my guard against illusions."

With that heavenly voice ringing in her ears, what were obstacles and what were dangers? Margaret

felt all her doubts and hesitations vanish like a morning mist before the rising sun.

She went on her way as usual, going from one house of suffering to another, comforting and cheering, and thus waited quietly for news from de Maisonneuve who had returned to Paris.

## CHAPTER IV.

A JOURNEY TO PARIS — IN THE COACH — PARIS —  
A FIERY TRIAL — THE PROBLEM SOLVED —  
PARIS TO ORLEANS — REJECTION — BY RIVER  
TO NANTES — A NEW HUMILIATION — ARRIVAL —  
A HARSH RECEPTION — THE LAST CONFLICT —  
A WEARY HEART AT REST.

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WHEN the heavenly light had shone, revealing to Margaret the thorny path she was to tread, the obstacles it so clearly indicated did not daunt her courage. But she knew how insurmountable they would seem to others, especially to those who loved her; for this reason she kept her decision a secret from all but the priests to whom she trusted for guidance, and one intimate friend—Marguerite Crolo—her protégée and fellow-worker. Not even Madame de Chuly, with whom she lived, was informed of her project.

The day came when de Maisonneuve wrote to this sister, this very Madame de Chuly, asking her to meet him in Paris, that they might take leave of each other. It happened that Margaret's uncle, Mr. Cossard, (who was also guardian of her younger brother and sister), had business to transact in Paris



at the same time. So Margaret begged leave to make the journey with them, under the pretext of having some business of her own in the great capital.

When, on the 8th of February, 1653, the three fellow-travellers were seated in the rude, weather-beaten public coach, and Margaret looked back at the quaint old city, with a fond thought for the stone statue above the Abbey portal and for the dim church in which the Divine Infant had appeared before her, Madame de Chuly and Mr. Cossard little dreamed that what, to them, was a mere temporary departure was to Margaret a definite breaking away from the past, from home and friends and country.

The rumbling vehicle had left Troyes far behind, when Margaret rent the veil that had hidden her project, and explained what this journey meant to her. She unfolded her plans so simply, spoke of crossing the ocean, going to Canada, braving all its unknown dangers, with so much brightness and gaiety, that her friend and her uncle thought she was only jesting, and heard her disclosures with an indulgent smile. Perhaps one thing especially confirmed them in this idea; who could dream of leaving on such a journey without money or luggage? And Margaret had with her only a little bundle of clothes. But she herself explains this in her *Memoirs*: "After the apparition, as I dreaded illusion, I thought that if it came from God I had no need to take anything for the journey, and I said to myself: 'If God wills that I should go

to Ville-Marie, I need nothing,' and I left without money or clothes, having only a parcel small enough to be carried under my arm." Before leaving Troyes, she distributed to the poor whatever ready money she possessed. The Master had said: "Take nothing for your journey; neither staff nor scrip, nor bread, nor money," (Luke ix., 3.), and Margaret obeyed, trusting in that other word of His: "Be not therefore solicitous for tomorrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself." (Matthew vi., 34).

During the tedious journey — thirty-six miles in an old-fashioned, comfortless, jolting coach — Margaret's sweetness and gayety were unchanging and her companions became more and more convinced that her startling announcement was a mere joke. But when the journey was ended, the lodging house reached, the first bustle of arrival over, Mr. Cossard was surprised by an unexpected request; his niece wished to see a notary and begged him to accompany her. He consented readily enough, though with some curiosity. When Margaret quietly stated that she wished to relinquish all right to whatever might be coming to her from her parents, in favor of a younger brother and sister, Mr. Cossard's astonishment knew no bounds. For the first time he realized that she was not only quite serious, but most earnestly bent on carrying out her, (to his mind), mad project. He tried to change her purpose by reasoning,

pleading, entreating, but all in vain. The deed of gift was drawn up and duly signed.

Then Margaret came forth to face a storm of opposition. Her uncle, after telling Madame de Chuly, hastened back to Troyes to spread the strange news. A few days later a very avalanche of letters, some pathetic, some angry, some coldly sarcastic, some tenderly persuasive, poured in upon poor Margaret. She read them quietly but remained unshaken in her resolute purpose.

Severer trials met her before long. Madame de Bellevue, the good woman with whom she lodged, had a brother who was Provincial of the Carmelites. She urged Margaret to revert to her former design and enter the Carmelite Order, promising to obtain a place for her in the Novitiate through her brother's influence. Evil tongues had already endeavored to gain a similar end by slandering de Maisonneuve, hoping thus to prevent her from accompanying him. Though fully convinced of Chomedy's uprightness, Margaret was troubled and perplexed. The old attraction for the peaceful cloister, where prayer and penance join hands to lead the daughters of Carmel heavenward, revived in her heart, moving her almost irresistibly to accept the Provincial's readily-proffered help. Yet . . . her place was already taken in the coach that would leave next day for Orleans — and her dream — and her confessor's advice — and the vision — and so many secret indications of God's

will; did not all these point to Canada as her destined field of labor?

Tossed to and fro by conflicting feelings, worn out by the wearing strain of uncertainty, she decided to seek advice from the sons of St. Ignatius, ever famed for their wisdom in the guidance of souls. She hurried to the Rue St. Antoine, where stood one of the most celebrated Jesuit houses, and asked for a priest. God sent a wise and saintly missionary who had toiled in Canada and knew its dangers and its needs. With the candor of a child, Margaret, as Teresa had done a hundred years before, laid bare the most secret workings of her heart, and waited meekly for his decision. Like Francis Borgia listening to the Saint of Avila, the wise missionary saw at a glance the full beauty and strength of this privileged soul. Moreover, through all her efforts and trials, he clearly traced the guiding thread of a Providential mission. "Go to Canada," he said, "and fear nothing — it is God's will." Margaret rose, comforted and strengthened, and went to prepare for the morrow's journey.

A disciple of St. Ignatius had been chosen by God to fortify her troubled soul and give an apostle to Ville-Marie. When Canadians seek to calculate how much the Church in Canada owes to the Society of Jesus, this debt should not be forgotten.

Next day, Margaret Bourgeoys took her place in the coach\* to begin her long drive from Paris to Orleans.

She was alone, dressed plainly and carrying all her possessions in a small bundle; this sufficed to draw upon her at first curious, then suspicious looks from her companions. They all treated her with contempt, some even with rudeness. When the stage drew up before the hostelry at Orleans, the other lodgers spurned her, saying that they would not have her in their company, and the inn-keeper bade her seek lodgings elsewhere. So she slept, or rather *stayed*, for she spent the long hours in prayer, in a wretched house to which she was led by the

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\* This word "coach" brings to our minds the curious picture of a conveyance as unknown now as was the old-time chariot to our grand-parents. It was merely a covered box hung, not on springs, but on leather straps, and capable of accommodating as many as twelve passengers. This very plain vehicle was drawn by two or four stout cobs. The variety known as *stage* took its name from the fact that it journeyed by "stages," stopping several times before its destination was reached. The coach is said by some to be of French, by others, of Hungarian origin. The latter explain that the name itself is derived from the word "covered" as spoken by the people of Hungary. However this may be, the thing itself had, in 1653, been in use little over a century, there being but two in Paris during the reign of Francis I. and three in 1550. Previous to this, kings travelled on horseback, princesses were carried in litters and ladies rode behind their squires. At the end of the 16th century, people of quality began to drive in close carriages of good workmanship and the first of these let for hire was sent out by the Hotel Fiacre (hence the name "fiacre") just three years before Margaret took her place in the stage coach that travelled between Paris and Orleans.

driver of the coach. She left the miserable place in the early morning and embarked on the rough boat bound for Nantes. Among the twelve passengers, there was but one other woman with her child. Yet Margaret induced all on board to join her in prayer, and the time was spent in that boat as it might have been in a convent, all the way to Saumur. So great was her influence that, one Saturday, fearing to miss Mass, she even persuaded the captain of the boat to travel by night instead of waiting for the day. Yielding to her will, he consented to act in opposition to his hitherto invariable custom, and consequently all on board had the happiness of hearing Mass early Sunday morning.

About half way to Nantes, there was a halt at Saumur, where a night was to be spent on land. The little party of travellers passed from the boat to the shore and went in search of lodgings. At the chief hostelry, the people of the inn, seeing Margaret poor and alone, refused to admit her. Her fellow-travellers even the woman, far from pleading her cause, remained perfectly indifferent to her plight. However, a respectable citizen was moved to compassion and offered her lodgings with his family. She accepted gratefully, secretly rejoiced at having experienced the humiliation and rejection once suffered by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Strange to say, this affront did not diminish the respect of her fellow-travellers, nor even her influence over them. On the following

day, all met again on board the boat and the trip was resumed as before.

After three or four days of travel down the great Loire, Nantes was reached, and Margaret parted from her companions, going to seek Mr. Le Coq, for whom de Maisonneuve had given her a letter of introduction. She passed through the streets, with their curious houses of unattractive aspect, asking her way from time to time, but never meeting anyone who knew Mr. Le Coq.

At last she stopped a passer-by and asked her usual question. "Mr. Le Coq," the man returned, "I am Mr. Le Coq. And could you be the person about whom M. de Maisonneuve has written, telling me she intends going to Canada with him, and begging me to receive her as cordially as I would receive him?" "I am," replied Margaret, handing him the Governor's letter. Immediately Mr. Le Coq showed her the way to his house, as he had some business to despatch. With a feeling of such relief as might well be experienced after so many troubles, Margaret hastened towards the place pointed out by the good merchant.

Unfortunately, it was not customary in those days for women to travel without protectors, and seeing our heroine unaccompanied by a servant or chaperon, Madame Le Coq refused to admit her. Even this last blow did not disconcert Margaret. She received it meekly from the hand of God, and turning away

entered a neighboring church belonging to the Dominicans. There, a procession in honor of the Rosary was in progress. She assisted at it with even more than her usual fervor, and then returned to the Le Coq homestead — only to be met by a new affront from the irascible housewife. However, while she was gently explaining her identity to the angry dame, Mr. Le Coq himself came upon the scene and made everything clear to his wife. Then Madame Le Coq, with profuse apologies, begged Margaret to enter and accept their hospitality. During her whole stay, both husband and wife strove, by kindness and civility, to make their gentle guest forget the rudeness of her first reception.

Before the final departure, a last great trial was to test her vocation. Wishing to receive Holy Communion, and drawn by the ever-powerful attraction of her constant heart, she entered a Carmelite Church and there went to confession. It chanced that the priest, hearing of her project, thought fit to advise her to remain in France, and return to her early resolution of becoming a Carmelite. The hard-won peace, restored to Margaret's heart but a short time before in Paris, was suddenly and violently troubled. Once again the tempest of doubt and perplexity tossed her mind and will.

With anxious soul and tear-stained cheek, she went out of the church, passed aimlessly along the streets, then entered another church, where the Blessed



Sacrament was exposed. There, she fell upon her knees weeping and praying, pouring out her woes in the presence of her Lord. All the fervor of her ardent soul breathed in her supplications to know God's will — this, she protested, was her sole desire; to know His will that she might do it. In this her agony she breathed the same prayer as her Master, "Not my will, but Thine be done." None can tell what passed between God and her soul, but when she rose and left the church, all doubts were laid to rest forever and perfect serenity had settled upon her heart. One ray of divine light, one touch of divine grace — and the will of God was made known, and her own will rose up to meet It and become one with It.

Three weeks passed before Margaret left Nantes; there was much worry about temporal concerns, much bodily fatigue — but never again did she question the certainty of her vocation to Canada.

## CHAPTER V.

SAINT NAZAIRE — PREPARATION — CROSSING THE ATLANTIC IN 1653 — SHIP FEVER — NURSE AND TEACHER — A WEARY VOYAGE — CANADA AT LAST — A GLAD WELCOME.

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FROM Nantes, Margaret sailed in a small river-craft, and passed down the beautiful Loire, France's greatest river. Did her eyes linger regretfully on each detail of the picturesque shores, taking a silent farewell of her beloved France?

At last the boat stopped at a point of land where on the right bank of the Loire at its mouth, lies the once prosperous town of Saint Nazaire. Here, Margaret found some young women whom M. de la Dauversière had recommended to the future Governor of Montreal and who were to sail with him. What a welcome sight were these fellow travellers to her who had long dreaded being, for weeks, the only woman in the midst of a motley gathering!

The great moment of Margaret's life has come; she is about to begin that work for which God has destined her from all eternity and towards which His Providence has slowly, but surely, guided her docile steps. Let us look at her as, still calm and

strong as ever, she steps upon the deck of the "Saint Nicholas." Through her historian's eyes we see a youthful countenance in which are mirrored frankness, loyalty, and womanly gentleness. Her words and actions bear the stamp of a rare combination of good qualities: sound sense, extreme conscientiousness, and true warmth of heart.\*

The ship weighs anchor and slowly leaves the land, towards which Margaret casts a farewell look — but that farewell, made on the 20th of June, 1653, was not to be final. The "Saint Nicholas" had journeyed but a few days when it sprang so serious a leak that it had to turn back for repairs. A spirit of revolt now seized the colonists, and great excitement prevailed. Maisonneuve confined the refractory soldiers in a neighboring island, and so secured them until the ship was ready to sail. In the midst of this general commotion Margaret remained calm and self-possessed, her quiet courage being most useful in restoring peace.

At last everything was ready, and on the 20th of July, the feast of her patroness, St. Margaret, Martyr, she left her native land and began a long and eventful journey. We of this "*enlightened*" twentieth century, cannot realize what crossing the stormy Atlantic meant some two hundred and fifty years ago. We must forget the floating palaces that steam so swiftly over the ocean to-day and see only a wooden ship,

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\* Parkman. *The Jesuits in North America*, p. 201.

with a network of rigging, and great sails that flap idly, or fill and strain, as the wind falls or rises. From the narrow deck a ladder leads down into the hold, gloomy, damp and low-roofed. There, in that month of July, 1653, was crowded the group of colonists in a space that would now seem unfit, both as to size and comfort, for a consignment of valuable cattle.

Slowly the wretched old vessel crawled on, now tossed on stormy seas and beaten about by fierce winds, now laboriously creeping onward in an almost lifeless calm. To add to the misery and discomfort of the dreary crossing, a contagious fever, probably the result of bad water and unsanitary quarters, broke out among the travellers.

Margaret toiled night and day nursing the unfortunate victims, eight of whom died before land was reached. She cared for each of the sufferers with motherly tenderness and gladly gave up for their use the delicacies regularly sent her. Though in her sweet humility she declined the place reserved for her at the Governor's table, she readily accepted whatever could be bestowed upon the fever-stricken patients. Several barrels of fresh water had been put on board for Margaret's exclusive use, as the kindly captain knew that she never took wine. But she would drink only the brackish water allowed to the sailors, and gave her own provision to the poor invalids. Her constant practice was to drink but once a day, from a leathern cup that hung from her girdle,

never completely slaking her thirst. Nor did her love of suffering rest satisfied with this privation; she gave up to the sick her own bed, happy to take her few hours' rest upon the coils of rope on deck.

Though so hard upon herself, Margaret was always sweet and cheerful. Her bright and joyous courage like a ray of gladsome sunshine, dispelled the clouds of fear, impatience or utter discouragement which often settled upon many a heart in that dismal abode of hardship and sickness.

But Margaret was not content with a passive influence, of which she was probably unconscious; with true missionary zeal she delighted in teaching the soldiers and sailors. These sturdy men learned their catechism, said their prayers morning and night and joined in the pious exercises led by Sister Bourgeois with a child-like simplicity that must have filled their gentle teacher with great courage for the future. The long sea-voyage, with its serious inconveniences, its trials and dangers, afforded a fruitful field for her untiring zeal.

Each morning weary eyes gazed upon the same too familiar sight of infinite ocean and infinite sky, looking in vain across the shoreless waters for some glimpse of land. At last, after sixty-three long days, far ahead appeared the blue outline of the land for which they sighed.

With what feelings of longing and gratitude Margaret looked for the first time upon that new country

to which God had called her! She breathed a fervent prayer for help and placed herself once more under Mary's protection, while she gazed at the ever-nearing shores of Canada, truly her "promised land."

On moved the "Saint Nicholas" past the high rocky banks of Newfoundland, the undulating shores of Nova Scotia, the picturesque islands of the St. Lawrence, with its lovely bays and fertile banks radiant in the September sun. Then the ship, with its tired yet eager passengers, moved up the glorious St. Lawrence, leaving far behind Anticosti, the "great sterile island." The aromatic perfume of the piney forest greeted every nostril with invigorating freshness, and each tired eye rested contentedly on the green shores that looked so fair and attractive after the unbroken monotony of sea and sky.

And now on the 22d of September, 1653, a rocky height looms up in all its grand, imposing beauty. High over the great cliff floats the flag of Saint Louis, nearer the water are clustered one or two rambling store houses and a few rude wooden dwellings; lower still, canoes and boats are drawn up on the shelving beach. And see! an excited crowd is gathering upon the brow of the precipitous hill, while eager men run down the steep, narrow road, shouting an exultant welcome to the happy immigrants.

"We were most joyously received," writes Sister Bourgeoys. All the more joyously since news of the ship's intended sailing had reached Quebec long before

and, after weary waiting, the sore-pressed colonists had given up all hope of news or aid from their distant home. Public prayers had been offered for de Maisonneuve's safe arrival. The long delay was inexplicable, the cruel Iroquois were threatening — was the colony doomed to utter annihilation? At last the Blessed Sacrament had been exposed and the faithful prayed with redoubled fervor, imploring the Almighty to send them the needed help. What wonder if unutterable gladness now burst forth at sight of a sail, as a great cry went up, a cry that sounded like a thanksgiving, "The 'Saint Nicholas' has come!"

Petition now gave place to bursts of gratitude and the whole population flocked to the church. Thank God, the colony was saved, de Maisonneuve had brought a brave band to drive back the fierce Iroquois! Anxious watchers of the young colony and welcome travellers from the old land, their anguish and trials forgotten, felt the same joyful relief, as, with grateful hearts and glad voices, they intoned a solemn "Te Deum."

## CHAPTER VI.

OPPOSITION — KINDRED SOULS — FIDELITY TRIUMPHS — THE FIRST SIGHT OF VILLE-MARIE — A RETROSPECT — THE MOUNTAIN CROSS — A DANGEROUS TASK — WONDERS OF CHARITY — “ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL” — HEROES OF THE CROSS.

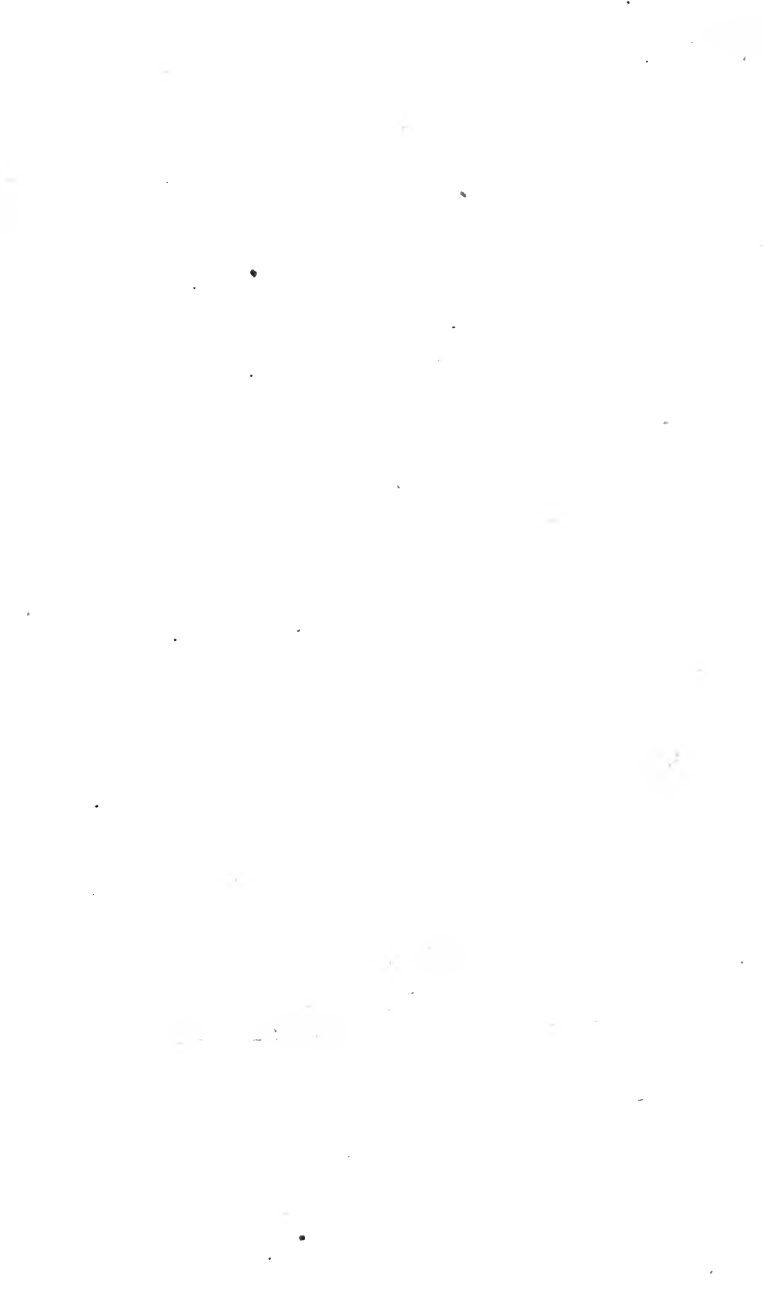
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**D**E MAISONNEUVE'S little company had accomplished the greater part of a long journey; but its trials were not yet over. De Lauzon, the Governor of New France, had sore need of soldiers, and the brave little contingent for Ville-Marie would, he thought, in great measure supply this pressing need. Therefore, he did all in his power to detain it in Quebec, while cherishing the secret design of keeping it there altogether. To attain this end, he exaggerated the difficulties of a trip to Ville-Marie, and the folly of trying to found a colony there, dwelling on its exposed position and its past struggles for existence. Finally, when de Maisonneuve's resolve still remained unshaken, de Lauzon refused to provide the boats which he had promised. Such stubborn resistance would have discouraged a weaker man, but it did not disturb the Governor of Ville-Marie.





JEANNE MANCE  
FOUNDRESS OF THE HOTEL DIEU DE MONTREAL.



He maintained, with quiet firmness, that the men sent out to the settlement would fail in their duty by staying in Quebec; and when the promised boats were withheld, he set about seeking for others.\*

In the meantime, Margaret had not been idle. Soon after her arrival in Quebec, she became friendly with the Ursuline nuns, in whom she found a spirit of zeal and devotedness akin to her own. They urged her to remain with them until the time for departure; but thinking it a duty to share in the hardships of her fellow-travellers, she regretfully and gratefully refused.

And when, admiring her rare gifts of heart and mind, the daughters of Saint Ursula asked Margaret to join their Community, her answer was the same: Since God called her to Ville-Marie would it be right to stop on the way?

During her enforced sojourn in Quebec, Margaret met another kindred soul, with whom she was to labor during many years for the good of Ville-Marie. This was the foundress of the Hotel-Dieu of Montreal, Jeanne Mance, to whom de Maisonneuve had recommended Margaret as a precious auxiliary in their work.†

With that of Margaret Bourgeoys, the name of Jeanne Mance shines out, fair and bright, in the early

\* P. Rousseau, P.S.S. "Vie de Paul C. de Maisonneuve." C. XVIII., p. 127.

† "Eloge historique" par M. l'abbé Sausseret, p. 26 et 27.

annals of Ville-Marie. To her belongs the signal honor of being the first of those brave women who helped to build up our home and make our history. In the bloom of early womanhood, fearless, firm, efficient, upheld by divine grace, urged on by apostolic zeal, she came with scarcely a female companion into a wilderness swarming with pitiless savages, covered with trackless forests, exposed to dangers of every kind, abounding in toil, privation and hardship. After de Maisonneuve, she was the leading spirit, the very life and strength of the enterprise; her energy stimulating the indolent, her undaunted courage shaming the timid, her womanly gentleness comforting the sick and wounded. Such was the fellow-laborer, to whom de Maisonneuve presented Sister Bourgeoys. Guided by the same heavenly light, working with the same strong will and the same brave, loving heart for the same unselfish end, Jeanne Mance and Margaret Bourgeoys became companions and sisters, closely bound to each other by a friendship as deep and tender as it was holy.

In the store-house of the Montreal Company, rough and comfortless, de Maisonneuve and his recruits had taken up their temporary abode. Here Margaret continued the work begun on shipboard — caring for the now convalescent fever-patients and cheering all by her unfaltering courage and winning sweetness.

The last days of September had gone, and October was well begun before the travellers could leave for Ville-Marie. As Margaret was borne slowly up the Saint Lawrence, she looked upon the same lovely Canadian sky and the same deep-blue river that we see to-day. But no white farm-houses stood among pleasant fields, no picturesque stone or brick churches reared their slender spires above clustering villages; instead of these, vast forests, dark and mysterious, reached to the water's edge.

On the 16th day of November, de Maisonneuve reached Ville-Marie — for the distance our steam-boats now cover in twelve hours, then entailed a whole fortnight of danger and hardship. Not since its foundation, eleven years before, had our Lady's town witnessed a more impressive scene. Upon the rippling waves lay the gray shadow of the dull November sky as the heavily-laden boats moved slowly up the river, passed Saint Helen's gracefully wooded shore and drove their keels into the soil of the new settlement.

With eager delight, Major Closse and the brave, war-broken little garrison welcomed de Maisonneuve and his followers, while the latter began to look more closely at their new home. On the present site of Saint Paul Street stood a strongly built fort, some three hundred and twenty feet in length, quadrilateral in shape, flanked by four stone bastions connected by a wooden curtain about twelve feet

high.\* Around it were grouped the rude cabins of the settlers; south of this fort, upon rising ground, (now the north-east angle of St. Paul and St. Sulpice Streets), was the Hotel-Dieu, a large solid building surrounded by a row of stout stakes. To the right of the central fort, on a slight eminence, rose a massive windmill with a loop-holed palisade. All around, fields studded with charred and blackened stumps, stretched away to the edge of dim, majestic forests. Above and behind all, the russet mountain was outlined against the sky.†

This wild, if beautiful place, peopled by the white race only eleven years before, had been the scene of heroic deeds and wonderful conversions since that feast of St. Teresa when Jesus in the Eucharist began a reign, which to this day has never been interrupted. Here Father Vimont had said the first Mass, and Jeanne Mance had toiled with unflagging energy among the sick and wounded. There Lambert Closse, defending the Hotel-Dieu with thirteen soldiers, had driven off in terror two hundred Iroquois. From the fort near by, men had issued day by day at the sound of a bell, with gun in one hand and tools in the other, to build houses and gather in the grain; and often before the same bell summoned them home, more

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\* P. Rousseau, P.S.S., *Vie de Paul C. de Maisonneuve*, ch. v., N. 52.

† Parkman. "Old Régime in Canada," ch. v. p. 99.

than one had fallen, pierced by an Iroquois arrow or stabbed by an Iroquois knife.

The Jesuit Relations tell us that the "extraordinary succor" given by de Maisonneuve's arrival with over a hundred men, each "stout of heart and skilful in his craft," had given joy not to Ville-Marie alone, but to the whole colony as well. "May God bless and reward them a hundred fold who began the great work, (the foundation of Ville-Marie), and grant them the glory of a holy perseverance" — thus finishes the chronicle.

From this 16th of November, 1653, Montreal, until then only a garrison, became a permanent settlement.

Their first days at Ville-Marie were busy ones for the new colonists. When the most pressing work was done, Margaret asked de Maisonneuve to take her to the "Mountain Cross" of which he had once spoken to her. During one of their conversations on board the "Saint Nicholas," the Governor had told Margaret a most interesting incident of his stormy life in the new island colony.

In the winter of 1643, there had been a sudden thaw. The river had swollen so rapidly that on Christmas Day the waters threatened to submerge the fort. The "Little River"\* overflowed, and its waves crept nearer and nearer. The Governor and his

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\* The present Craig Street, one of the thoroughfares of Montreal, covers the bed of the "Little River," which in the early days of the colony formed one of the boundaries of Ville-Marie.

people prayed earnestly for deliverance, and the former moved by a sudden impulse, promised on bended knees that, if the waters fell without harming the fort, he would carry a cross upon his shoulders to the mountain top and plant it there. Still, as if to try his faith, the waters rose higher and higher, until they filled the moat and lapped against the very threshold of the door. Then, pausing one moment, they gradually receded until all danger was over. At once the Governor gave orders for the making of a cross.

On the Feast of the Epiphany, a little procession, singing hymns as it went, made its slow and painful way up to the summit of Mount Royal. At its head walked the Jesuit du Perron, followed by Madame de la Peltrie, the artisans and soldiers, and last of all, by Maisonneuve. The Governor of Ville-Marie bore upon his shoulders the great cross that was soon to crown the mountain and proclaim to the surrounding country God's mercy and a loyal Christian's gratitude.\*

And de Maisonneuve had said to Margaret at the story's close, "When we reach Ville-Marie, I shall take you up the mountain and show you this cross."

The hour had now come to fulfil his promise, but de Maisonneuve could not spare the time required for the expedition. Margaret therefore resolved to go without him. Ascending Mount Royal was no trifling excursion when an Iroquois might be hidden

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\* Vimont, Relation, 1643-52-53.



behind every shrub and the roads were of the most primitive kind. To insure safety from the blood-thirsty Indians, the Governor sent with Sister Bourgeoys an escort of thirty armed men.

After a long climb, the little band reached the summit. Margaret stepped forward, and uttered a low exclamation of dismay echoed by her companions. During the Governor's absence the cross had been ruthlessly destroyed by the Iroquois — only scattered fragments marked the place where it had stood. With saddened hearts the would-be pilgrims retraced their steps down the woody slope.

Margaret urged de Maisonneuve to replace the mountain cross, for she yearned to restore to the inhabitants of Ville-Marie their place of pilgrimage. He consented readily, asking her to supervise the dangerous work. Margaret, the soldiers and the workmen toiled up the mountain-side, and began the task of building and erecting another large cross. Inspired by a beautiful spirit of faith, she helped the workers by word and action, directing and encouraging them and even serving them at meals. After the third day, the cross stood erect once more, protected by a palisade of stakes; but the zealous workers were debarred from returning to visit it, for the Iroquois lurked behind surrounding bushes watching their chance to leap out upon them with murderous knife or tomahawk.

This second cross stood out boldly upon the mountain's highest crest until about the time of the Conquest, when it disappeared.

During the first months of Margaret's sojourn in Ville-Marie, comparative quiet reigned in the colony. As no French children were old enough to be taught, those born in Montreal having nearly all died in infancy, her duties as educator did not begin for some time. The zeal that consumed her heart found an outlet in other good works. As an anonymous writer of Margaret Bourgeoys' life, a biographer, whose quaint simplicity and touching piety seem to bring the reader back to the ages of faith, has sweetly said, she was "a common mother, the eye of the blind, the foot of the lame, the consolation of the afflicted the support of the feeble and of the indigent, making herself all things to all men, in order to gain them all to Jesus Christ."

Her tender, unselfish sympathy found many ways of doing good that others might have despised. She even washed and mended clothes for the poor and for the brave soldiers of Ville-Marie. Still, that one irresistible attraction, which she had felt even as a child of ten, drew Margaret towards the young girls of the colony, many of whom had had no opportunity to improve their minds.

There were then about fifty houses in Ville-Marie, and to each of these she went by turn speaking words of counsel or instruction to old and young alike. To

quote once more the saintly chronicler mentioned above, Sister Bourgeoys was “*de Maisonneuve’s* worthy co-operator; while the latter was building a material town in Mary’s honor, she erected a spiritual empire in the hearts of the faithful.”

One bitter winter’s day, a poor half-frozen soldier came to Sister Bourgeoys, complaining that he had no bed. On a similar occasion, Martin of Tours had given half his cloak to a shivering mendicant, Elizabeth of Hungary had despoiled herself of her rich ducal mantle, Aidan had bestowed his horse, a king’s gift, with all its costly trappings. With these and many of God’s other saints, Margaret shared the generous spirit of self-sacrifice that marks true charity. As she heard the soldier’s complaints, the thought of Mr. Le Coq’s gift — a bed with all its accessories — came into her mind. Without a moment’s hesitation, she placed the mattress in the now happy soldier’s hands. Soon afterwards, a second soldier having heard of his companion’s good luck, repeated to Sister Bourgeoys the same piteous tale. Gladly welcoming an opportunity of further privation, Margaret had soon parted with her *paillasse*, and the suppliant departed well pleased. Before darkness had settled upon the island two miserably dressed men came for an alms, little dreaming that Margaret was robbing herself to give to others. On them she bestowed her bed coverings. He who forgets not to reward the gift of “even a cup of cold water,”

must have bidden His angel write this deed in letters of gold upon the pages of the Book of Life. Meanwhile, Sister Bourgeoys took her rest upon the cold, hard ground, thanking God in lowly gratitude for the heavenly joy that flooded her soul that night.

During four long years in the midst of attacks of the Iroquois, (for hostilities began again in the spring of 1654), while the small colony lived in a state of continual watchfulness and alarm, Margaret led the same life of labor, self-denial and universal charity. The fact that she was chosen by de Maisonneuve to restore the mountain cross, and that the colonists were always eager to forward all her wishes abundantly proves the respect and ascendancy which she had won in Ville-Marie by her wisdom and holiness.

Fear of the outside foe did not mar the peace that reigned within. Sœur Morin of the Hotel-Dieu, gives us a charming picture of Ville-Marie in 1654 — a picture that might have been taken from “the Acts of the Apostles” or from the records of another French colony of this and a later period, the dwelling place of those gentle Acadians,

“Whose lives glided on like rivers that water the  
woodlands,

Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an  
image of heaven.”

“Nowhere,” she tells us, “were locks or keys considered necessary; for houses, chests, cellars, were left open and there was never any reason to regret this

seeming imprudence. The well-to-do settlers shared their goods with the poorer ones, not even waiting to be asked for aid but giving freely and generously." Is not this an exact counterpart of Longfellow's description of Grand-Pré?

"Neither locks had they to their doors, nor bars to their windows;  
But their dwellings were open as day and the hearts of the owners;  
There the richest were poor, and the poorest lived in abundance."

*(Evangeline).*

Meanwhile, the spiritual wants of the colonists were supplied by those ardent soldiers of Christ of whom a Protestant historian has said: "Not a cape was turned, nor a river entered, but a Jesuit led the way."\* From Montreal, they set out to teach and baptize the savage tribes that lived in the neighboring wilds, and to Montreal they returned, worn out with labor and travel and often bearing the mark of brutal torture and mutilation.

But now we have come to a new period in the history of Ville-Marie and in the life of Margaret Bourgeois; in the year 1657 the Sulpicians came to the island and Margaret opened her first school.

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\* Bancroft.

## CHAPTER VII.

A MOMENTOUS DECISION — SULPICIAN IN CANADA —  
THE BIRTH OF A COMMUNITY — A PROJECT AND  
A PROHIBITION — FIRST FRUITS OF AN APOS-  
TOLATE — THE BURDEN GROWS TOO HEAVY —  
MARGARET'S PLAN.

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**D**URING six years one Jesuit alone ministered to several hundred souls in Ville-Marie. We read of Père Claude Pijart, Margaret Bourgeoys' director, as the only priest in the settlement until he resigned the heavy charge on August 12, 1657.\* The chief aim of his society in Canada at the time was the conversion of Indians, and, owing to the ever-increasing number of converts among distant tribes, parish work became well nigh impossible.

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\* Pere Claude Pijart began his ministrations in Montreal in 1650, and from 1651 to 1657 he alone had spiritual charge of the parish. Previous to him fourteen Fathers of the Society of Jesus had labored there. Their names may be found in a small MS. volume, dated 1836, and entitled "Le Petit Registre in 4to de la Cure de Montreal," par Jacq. Viger, *ecr.*, kept in the Archives of Saint Mary's College, Montreal. It is interesting to note among them the name of Isaac Jogues, the great Jesuit whom the Iroquois martyred in 1646. He was in Montreal the previous year. All those named in the above mentioned book had made entries in the parish register of births, marriages or burials.

The colonists, often deprived of the ministrations of a priest, urged de Maisonneuve to appeal to France for resident pastors.

Father Olier, one of the most zealous members of the Montreal Company, and founder of the Sulpician order, had long desired to come to Canada, but the noble task of opening seminaries for the French clergy at home debarred him from realizing his pious wish, and his desire to send missionaries to work in his stead was fulfilled only when the end of his life was very near.

Pressed by the colonists, Margaret Bourgeoys, Jeanne Mance and de Maisonneuve himself agreed that the time had come to make a strenuous appeal to the founder of the Sulpicians. It was decided that de Maisonneuve should go to France and lay the facts of the case before Father Olier. In Paris, the Governor of Ville-Marie saw the aged and feeble Superior of Saint Sulpice. He urged the state of Ville Marie, the earnest wish of its inhabitants and his own desires with so much eloquence that Father Olier, after fervent prayer and serious deliberation, decided to send to Canada, Gabriel de Queylus, a member of the Montreal Company, Francois d'Allet, Gabriel Souart and Dominique Galinier. In naming and sending the first of those missionaries who were to play so great a part in the history of Ville-Marie, Father Olier performed his last official act of authority, for he died on the 2d of April, 1657, before their departure,

On his arrival in Canada de Queylus went up to Montreal, introduced his companions to their new field of labor, and then returned to his headquarters at Quebec. Shortly afterwards, he was called upon to visit a place as dear to Canadians of to-day as it was to their ancestors of the "Grand Siècle." It may not be inopportune to remind readers of Mother Bourgeoys' life that, together with the devotion to Our Lady and Saint Joseph, devotion to Saint Anne, the Blessed Virgin's mother, was brought to Canada by the first missionaries. In the early days of New France a little chapel was built in honor of Saint Anne on the banks of the Saint Lawrence, seven leagues below Quebec and became a place of pilgrimage. To this day Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré is loved by all Canadians and is still made famous by well-authenticated miracles.

Another interesting event of the same year was the death, at the Hotel-Dieu, of the first Iroquois nun, a young maiden, Agnes Shannadhoroi. She received the holy habit from Father de Queylus, and made her vows on the eve of her death.

On the 21st of November, 1657, Ville-Marie became a parish, and Father Souart was named Curé. Speaking of this period, Parkman, the most interesting and most prejudiced of Protestant historians, says: "The priests of Saint Sulpice, who had assumed the entire spiritual charge of the settlement, and who were soon to assume its entire temporal charge also,



had for years no other lodging than a room at the hospital adjoining those of the patients. They caused the building to be fortified with palisades, and the houses of some of the chief inhabitants were placed near it for mutual defence. They also built two fortified houses, called Sainte-Marie and Saint-Gabriel, at the two extremities of the settlement, and lodged in them a considerable number of armed men whom they employed in clearing and cultivating the surrounding lands, the property of their Community. The laborers always carried their guns to the field, and often had need to use them.” \*

The wish grew within Margaret's heart to glorify God and honor our Blessed Lady by building a chapel in which she could gather together the young girls of Ville-Marie and instil into their lives a deep and practical devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She was encouraged by Père Pijart, and de Maisonneuve willingly agreed to help in the execution of her project, leaving her free to chose the site of the proposed chapel. Margaret's choice was the place where the old church of Notre Dame de Bonsecours now stands, then about four hundred paces from the town.

Most of the colonists were eager to help with the good work; some brought wood, others stone, the prosperous settlers gave money, the poorer ones gave time and labor. Thanks to this zealous co-operation, the foundations were soon laid and the building itself

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\* *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 54.

begun. In the meantime, M. de Queylus arrived and, not knowing either de Maisonneuve or Margaret Bourgeoys, forbade the building of the new chapel; so everything came to a standstill, for, when lawful authority spoke, Margaret neither reasoned nor hesitated. Out of this seeming misfortune came a great advantage. Instead of a wooden chapel the colonists had, later on, a stone one, and it was partly to this event that they owed the Congregation de Notre Dame. According to an old writer, Margaret, when planning to gather girls together in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady, had not thought of founding a Community as, with God's help, she later resolved to do.

To us, however, the most interesting event of the year 1657 was the opening of Margaret Bourgeoys' first school. As the years went on, the number of colonists increased so steadily that Margaret found it impossible to go from house to house as she had done in the beginning; so she determined to open a school for both boys and girls. She tells us in her "Memoirs" how and where this first school was opened: "Four years after my arrival, M. de Maisonneuve gave me a stone stable as a dwelling for those who would help in the school. This stable had been used as a cattle-shed and dove-cote. Above, and reached by an outside ladder, was a loft in which we slept. The building was cleaned, a chimney built and everything prepared for the children's comfort." Here Sister Bourgeoys laid the foundation of her Community—a

Community destined to spread, throughout the continent and for centuries to come, the spirit and virtues of the Mother of God. Like many other great foundations, it had a humble beginning in order that God might be glorified by its wonderful success. Born in a stable, like the Redeemer of mankind, it was to extend over all our country to the honor of the Catholic Church and the happiness of innumerable families.

Margaret left the Governor's house,\* and with her only companion, Margaret Picaud, took possession of her new home on the Feast of Saint Catherine, to begin as a teacher that life which was to prove so marvellously fruitful.

Another of Margaret's good works, dating also from this period, was the education of little Indian girls whom she adopted and cared for with all a mother's devotion. Their own mothers were quite willing to part with them for some trifling gift. The first of these little girls was baptized on the fourth of August, 1658, receiving the name of Marie des Neiges. According to Père Lemoine, she was the first Iroquois ever baptized in the colony. Elizabeth Moyen, wife

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\* While Margaret Bourgeoys lived at the Governor's house, she looked after it, cared for the chapel, and devoted herself to various charitable works. She also took charge of two little children, Jeanne Loysel and Jean Desrochers, both born in 1649. They are said to have been under her care in 1653. *Les Servantes de Dieu en Canada*. C. de Laroche—Héron, (Montreal, John Lovell, 1855,) p. 45.

of Lambert Closse, being godmother.\* She died at the age of six, while still under Margaret's care. Later, two other Iroquois girls, adopted by Margaret Bourgeoys, also received the name of Marie des Neiges. Another proof of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin under this title is the fact that, on her suggestion, the mountain of Montreal was placed under the patronage of Our Lady of the Snows.

Margaret's maternal solicitude for Indian children, shared by all her companions and inherited by her spiritual daughters, has been perpetuated to this day in the Indian mission of Oka, Lake of Two Mountains.

The population of Ville-Marie was ever increasing as the settlement spread and developed. Very soon Margaret and her companion found the task of teaching all the children too heavy for their unaided efforts. Even their zeal and devotedness could not impart enough strength for labors that grew harder each day. Margaret saw clearly that, if her mission was to be continued, it was absolutely necessary to find companions to share her work and lighten her burden. As there were none in the young colony, she resolved to return to France, and there seek aid.

All these years she had lovingly remembered the maidens of Troyes who were to have co-operated with her in the education of young girls. The time had now come for this incipient community to be planted

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\* *Petit Régistre in 4to de la Cure de Montreal*, Js. Viger, p. 25.

in Canadian soil, and Margaret determined to seek out her former companions and ask them to come with her to labor for God and souls in the New World.

From a merely human standpoint this journey seemed a rash, an absurd undertaking. What could Margaret Bourgeoys hope to obtain by setting out from Montreal alone, unprotected and penniless, to undertake a tedious and often perilous voyage across the ocean? Could she expect that naturally weak and timid girls would even listen to her proposal, much less forsake their homes and go with a comparative stranger to a land whose inhabitants were being decimated by the severity of a rigorous climate or the cruelty of blood-thirsty Indians? Yet no such fears came to shake her resolve, obeying what she thought to be a heaven-sent inspiration, she prepared to leave Canada, upborne by a firm hope of success, "perhaps" says one of her biographers, "with a distinct and prophetic foresight of all that was to occur, as may be conjectured from the assurance she gave to one in whom she had great confidence that her journey would not outlast a year."

## CHAPTER VIII.

A PROVIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY — A STORMY CROSS-  
ING — FRANCE ONCE MORE — BRAVE RECRUITS —  
A FATHER'S SACRIFICE — AN EVENTFUL JOUR-  
NEY — PARIS TO LA ROCHELLE — THE ST. ANDRE  
SAILS — A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE — NEW RE-  
SPONSIBILITIES — QUEBEC TO VILLE-MARIE.

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**M**ARGARET, having laid her plans, was now awaiting a favorable opportunity. A seemingly Providential one soon presented itself. During the winter, Jeanne Mance had slipped on the ice and broken her right wrist. The injured arm recovered partially, but remained so weak and painful that she could scarcely use it. This proved a great hindrance in her work among the sick and wounded. Grieved at being forced to interrupt her labors, she resolved to cross over to France, see M. de la Dauversière\* and ask him for two or three of the religious belonging to his new foundation at La Flèche. Her almost useless arm made travelling

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\* Dauversière, (Jérôme Leroyer de la) member of the Montreal Company, of which he was the prime mover and first general agent. One of the most zealous workers in behalf of the foundation of Ville-Marie, and more particularly of the Hôtel-Dieu. Died in 1660.

without a companion well-nigh impossible. Margaret Bourgeoys, like a true sister, came to her rescue and offered to share with her friend the fatigues and trials of the long journey. Together the two foundresses left Montreal for Quebec, whence they sailed in the month of October.

As the ship in which they crossed the Atlantic was filled with Huguenots, the two sisters were lodged in the gun-room, which they left but seldom during the whole voyage. Morning and night, regardless of the King's orders limiting the Edict of Nantes,\* the heretics raised their voices in noisy hymns and prayers, until Jeanne Mance reminded them of their duty as subjects of King Louis. Awed by her coolness and determination, they not only interrupted their loud demonstrations but, during the remaining days of the voyage, they treated the defenceless women with marked respect.

The ship reached La Rochelle only about Christmastide. The two fellow-travellers went at once to La Flèche, a little town on the Loir, whose name is derived from the spire placed above St. Thomas' Priory in the twelfth century. They met de la Dauversière, and a little later, set out for Paris. In the French capital, they saw the priests of Saint Sulpice, and Jeanne Mance received an extraordinary favor;

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\* Edict of Nantes. Published by Henry IV. of France, allowing Calvinists liberty of conscience, freedom of worship and admission to public offices, A. D., 1598. Revoked by Louis XIV. in 1685.

her injured wrist was miraculously cured by mere contact with a leaden case containing Father Olier's heart.

Sister Bourgeoys soon after left Paris for her native town, where she stayed with the religious of the Congregation de Notre Dame. She told them the object of her journey and they favored her project though realizing its manifold difficulties. Like all who heard of her project, they recognized that success depended entirely on the help of Providence, for it was far above the sphere of merely human energy and endeavor. "I hoped for this aid," writes Sister Bourgeoys, "nor was I disappointed in my expectation, for it never failed me in time of need."

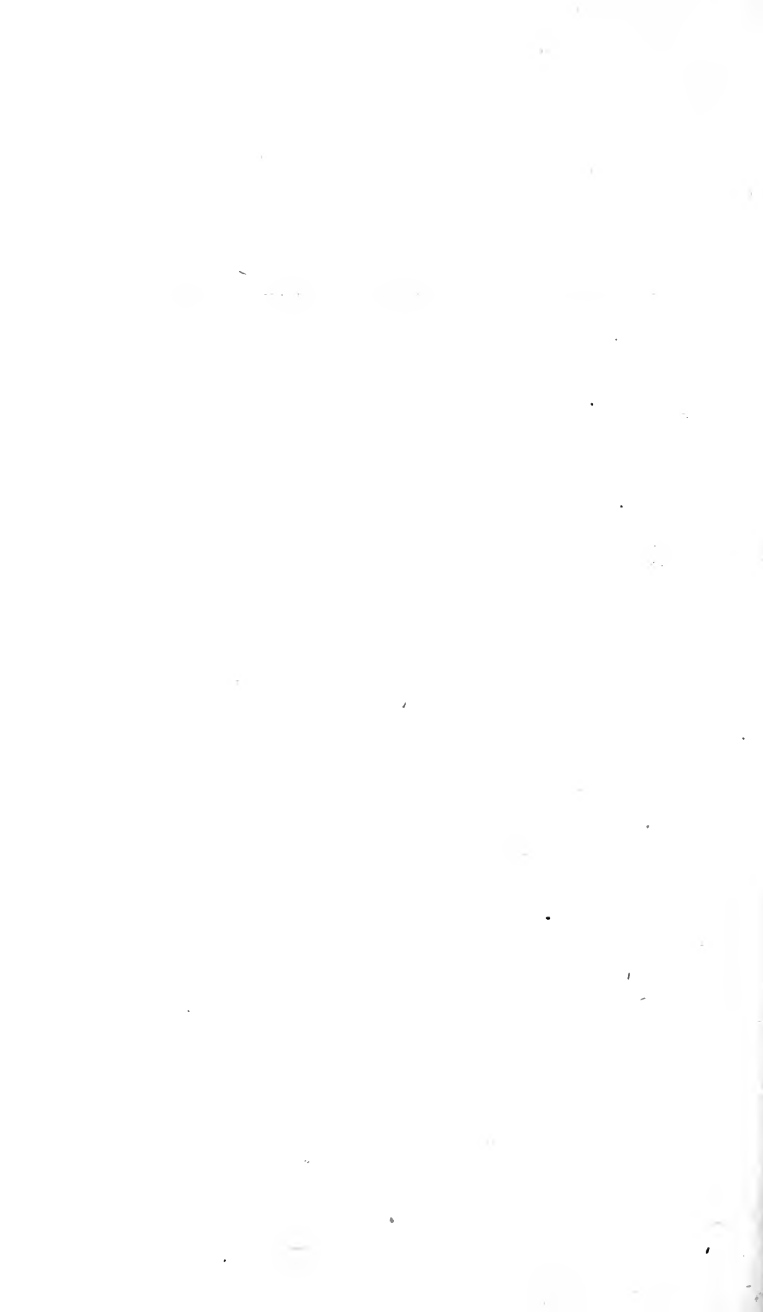
As soon as the news of her arrival and the reason for her visit spread through the little town, three of her former companions came to offer themselves as missionaries to Canada. "These," she tells us, "were Sister Aimée Châtel, Sister Catherine Crolo, and Sister Marie Raisin; the last-named hoped to obtain her father's consent in Paris, where he was staying."

If Margaret's courage in leaving France for Canada is admirable, that of her new companions is no less wonderful. They tore themselves away from parents and friends, gave up the joys of family life, left their native land forever — and to what end? To follow a woman but little older than themselves, whose only fortune was her unlimited confidence in God and who could promise them nothing but labor, poverty





REVEREND J. J. OLIER  
FOUNDER OF THE SULPICIAN ORDER



and humiliation. What glorious results might safely be expected from such Christ-like beginnings!

"Above all else," relates Sister Bourgeoys, "I admired the manner in which M. Châtel, who was apostolic notary, confided his dearly-beloved daughter to me. As he had repeatedly asked how we should live in Ville-Marie, I showed him the contract giving me possession of the stable formerly used as dove-cote and cattle-shed. "Well," said he, "that may do for your lodging; but what about your other needs?" I told him we should work for our support and that I could safely promise my companions bread and *pollage*. At this, the tears started to his eyes. He loved his daughter fondly, but he would not oppose the designs of Providence upon her. The bishop having been consulted, the contracts binding Aimée Châtel and Catherine Crolo to live together as teachers in Ville-Marie, were duly drawn up and signed in M. Châtel's own office. "Sister Châtel's father," continue the *Memoirs*, "was kind enough to provide a trunk for his daughter's clothes and a chest for her linen. Moreover, by his orders, 150 livres in gold were sewed into her clothing, with the injunction that this fact be mentioned to no one; so that, should she wish to return, the means would be at her disposal. Finally, he wrote to all the important places through which we were to pass, ordering that if his daughter required anything on the way, it should be

given to her, as well as whatever she might need to return to Troyes, should she wish to do so."

At last Margaret and her companions set out for Paris. Although a father's provident solicitude for his daughter had sought to smooth their path beforehand, the journey was not without trials. First of all, their coachman was arrested, because it was forbidden to hire a private carriage to the exclusion of public conveyances. The travellers retraced their steps, and arriving at Troyes, went to M. Châtel for help and advice. Through his influence they were enabled to resume their journey. Then, one Sunday, the surly coachman refused to stop over that the Sisters might hear Mass. However, just as they were passing a church one of the wheels of the carriage rolled off, and while the driver strove to mend it, Margaret and her companions were able to be present at the Holy Sacrifice. The wheel proved quite useless, and none could be had nearer than Paris. Those who could not walk so great a distance were obliged to wait until the coachman went to Paris and returned with another carriage for them.

At length Paris was reached, and Marie Raisin went to seek her father's consent. The task was a hard one, but after much pleading the loving father yielded to his only daughter's prayer. The usual contract was signed, and Mr. Raisin offered Margaret Bourgeoys one thousand francs as his daughter's dowry. She would not accept more than three

hundred, but M. Raisin refused to be outdone in generosity. "Every year of his life," says Sister Bourgeoys "he gave us 35 livres for the 700 I had refused; and after his death, his son continued the same charity. When this son died, we received a pension of 300 livres in favor of his sister."

In Paris also, several volunteers joined the little band of missionaries. Of one of these, the *Memoirs* say: "M. Blondel gave me one of his nieces that I might bring her to Canada;" this was Sœur Hioux, who was the first to be received into the Community in 1659, under the name of St. Clare.

Taking advantage of Margaret Bourgeoys and Jeanne Mance's return to Canada, the Sulpicians went to great expense to equip and send out a large number of men and girls; they selected twenty-three men and thirty-two young women, all of unimpeachable character. The latter were placed under Sister Bourgeoys' care. She devoted herself to them with motherly solicitude during the entire crossing, and afterwards received them into her house, and continued to watch over them and help them in every way until they were married.

Speaking of this voyage, Dollier de Casson\* relates an incident that proves more conclusively than

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\* Casson (François Dollier de) Third Superior of St. Sulpice and *Seigneur* of Montreal. At first a soldier, he served under Turenne as captain of cavalry. Entered the Sulpician order in 1657. Came to Canada in 1665. Died in 1701. Wrote a *History of the Island of Montreal*.

anything hitherto narrated the sincerity of Margaret Bourgeoys' disinterestedness. A member of the Montreal Company, deeply moved by her apostolic zeal, offered her an endowment sufficient to assure the future of the infant Community. Sister Bourgeoys rejected the offer, fearing that the possession of so much money would endanger the spirit of poverty so carefully cherished by her; the dearest wish of her heart being to leave that spirit to her daughters as a precious heritage.

The out-bound ship was to sail from La Rochelle, so Margaret went thither with her companions. Jeanne Mance, with three recruits, soon joined her. Troubles now arose to delay their departure. The captain, conceived the idea perhaps suggested to him by enemies of the Montreal Company, that the would-be passengers were planning to cheat him. Though he had agreed to take them for a smaller sum, he insisted on obtaining 175 livres from each. "And," adds Sister Bourgeoys, "we had no money; they refused to accept M. de Maisonneuve's name as our security, and demanded that Sister Raisin return to Paris and obtain means of paying — I was very much worried." Nevertheless, the captain was at last content with a promise of payment, and soon after, the vessel set sail.

It was on the 2nd day of July, after a delay of three months, that the St. André spread her sails and moved away towards New France. So, on the Feast of the

Visitation, Margaret and her first companions left France for Canada, urged onward by a spark of the charity that burned in the young Virgin-Mother's heart when she hastened over the "hill country" to visit her cousin Elizabeth. It was certainly a beautiful coincidence for souls whose chief aim was to imitate the missionary life of Our Lady.

The ship was crowded; there were over two hundred passengers; colonists for Montreal, sturdy laborers, artisans, peasants and soldiers; there were two priests, the future martyrs Le Maître and Vignal, but, as Parkman tells us: "The most conspicuous among these passengers were two groups of women — under the direction of Margaret Bourgeoys and Jeanne Mance; Margaret Bourgeoys, whose face bespoke her fitness for the task, was the foundress of the school for female children at Montreal; her companion, a tall, austere figure, worn with suffering and care, was the directress of the hospital."\*

The Saint André was a large ship and comfortable enough, yet the journey was far from prosperous. The vessel had served for two years as a military hospital, and, owing to a carelessness that seems inexplicable, had never been disinfected. It was, in truth, a very hot-house of disease, as the unfortunate colonists discovered to their cost. Nearly all fell victims to pestilence. A very short time after the

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\* Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, (TORONTO, GEO. N. MORANG & Co., 1899.) P. 91.

ship's departure, seven or eight passengers died, and after a brief, heart-rending ceremony, their bodies were cast into the deep.

At first, the *Hospitalières de St. Joseph*, were debarred from lending their aid to combat the dreadful scourge; but finally, their pleading won, and they devoted themselves to the stricken victims. From that hour, no fresh names were added to the death-list. Margaret Bourgeoys lent her aid with unstinted generosity, and those whom she tended found in her the kindest of nurses.

She did not escape contagion altogether, but had a slight attack of fever; her companions suffered severely, so did the hospital nuns, Jeanne Mance being brought nearer death than any of the others. We need not the testimony of historians and biographers to convince us that Margaret allowed no one to take her place by her friend's bedside. With sisterly devotion, she watched by her fellow-worker, bringing her back to life and strength by tender care and skilful nursing.

"The whole Thibaudeau family," Sister Bourgeoys tells us, "was brought to the last extremity, save one baby girl still in the cradle, of whom no one would take charge. I heard some people talk of throwing her into the sea, but the mere thought of such a thing grieved me exceedingly. Against the advice of all our party, most of whom were ill, I asked leave to care for her." So here was a new occupation,



added to all those that Margaret's kind hands found to do from sunrise to sunset in the crowded ship!

At length, after being buffeted by frequent storms in a close, infected ship, the sorely-tried colonists anchored under the great rock of Quebec on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, 1659. Mary's daughters, having left France on one of their mother's feasts and reached their new home on another, felt very sure of the Blessed Virgin's blessing on their unselfish task.

The ship's company, having been duly welcomed by the citizens of Quebec, remained there until the invalids had completely recovered, Margaret and Jeanne Mance, with their companions, continuing the ministrations begun during the crossing.

This is the conclusion of the touching story of Margaret Bourgeoys' little charge, as related in her own quaint words. "When we reached Quebec, I went with all our girls to lodge in the Montreal Company's store-house. As the child, by her constant crying, and the fear of contagion her presence inspired, was a source of trouble to many of our party, and as I was obliged to attend to my business in Quebec, I confided the tiny girl to her father, who was then in better health, promising that on our departure for Montreal, I would take her once more. The end of September had come, the weather in Quebec was very cold; so the men belonging to the crew had made

a great fire in their quarters. The baby's father laid her to sleep near the fire, but a little too near, for her back was badly burnt. This was a new complication for me, since I had to attend to her burns without either bandages or remedies for the purpose.

All this was the occasion of much care and trouble to me during all the time of the trip from Quebec to Montreal. However, when we reached Montreal, the child was well. Then I gave her in charge to a nurse, but she died shortly after. Some thought the change of food had killed her, and I was deeply grieved at her death." Truly, in Margaret Bourgeoys' heart strength and tenderness were admirably blended, and her life reminds us of Lamartine's words, "*Rien n'est si doux que ce qui est fort.*"

But to return to the colonists brought out by the St. André. When the patients were well again, or at least on the road to recovery, the little troop of settlers left for Ville-Marie. "We reached Montreal," writes Sister Bourgeoys, "on St. Michael's day. In this event, I admired the kindness of Providence; for, on my departure, having begged Father Galinier not to deprive me of my post as sacristan, he replied that I should have it no longer if my journey outlasted a year. And we arrived on the self-same date as that on which we had left the preceding year, and at nearly the same hour. The care of the sacristy with its attendant duties, in so far as a woman can discharge them, was confided to me according to my wishes."

## CHAPTER IX.

A LOWLY HOME — WORK RESUMED — A STRENUOUS LIFE — IDEALS IN ACTION — NEW FOUNDATIONS — SUMMARY MATCH-MAKING — A WOMAN'S INFLUENCE.

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**I**T was to the little stone building described in the last chapter, the one-time stable and pigeon-loft, that Margaret, her face shining with a joyous welcome, introduced her new companions. This is the one home she seems to have really loved in her whole life with a tender, clinging love. During the past year of travel and inevitable worry, her mind had often reverted to it as to a haven of rest, prayer and peace. She had loved every rough stone and every bare plank in it. She loved them for the very bareness and simplicity that recalled Bethlehem and Nazareth. Leaving it, was to be one of the greatest sorrows of her life. She wanted her co-laborers to love it also; appreciation of it was, in a way, the test of their fitness to be her companions and co-workers.

The birth-place of the Congregation was once more made clean and neat. It must have been attractive for one of Mother Bourgeoys' historians quaintly

says: "In their poverty, they adorned it, in a fashion that might inspire love of holiness and poverty, even in the proudest and most fastidious."

So Sister Bourgeoys, now helped by Sisters Crolo, Châtel and Raisin, took up once again the burden of work she had laid down one year before. The colony had considerably increased, two hundred men and forty girls being added to the population during the years 1658-59. There was consequently more work and more teaching. Yet the number of pupils was at first comparatively small and they taught both boys and girls, until the Sulpicians, some years later, took charge of the former. Margaret's very first little pupil is said to have been a girl named Jeanne Loisel, the first child born in Montreal who survived the early years of hardship, and the first young girl to be married there. But little later came Marie Barbier, who passed from childhood to youth under Margaret's care, and then asked to be received among her followers. At that time, the little Community could scarcely be said to constitute a religious order, for they were without rules and lived in a manner distinct from that of any existing order. As the old biographer of 1818 says: "They were truly without bonds in an open prison." But Margaret had always in mind the Community the foundation-stones of which had been laid in Troyes, and these companions she moulded and prepared and fitted to do the work most necessary in Canada. They must

exact nothing and be a burden to no one, for God had sent them to help and not to hinder in any way. Where every one was poor and obliged to work from morning till night to obtain the very necessities of existence, they must be poorer than all, and work, if need be, from night till morning as well as from morning till night. No remuneration could be expected for teaching the children whose heavily-taxed mothers found little time to look after them, since the women had to help the men in the fields.

One cannot help wishing there were more details concerning the life of these first religious of a new order in so young a country. That their life was hard and their privations many, both Sister Bourgeoys' own words and the writings of the time show very clearly; but they deal mostly in generalities, while our modern minds demand more incidents and proofs. One has to supply the necessary details from pictures drawn from other sources. Here are a few lines from the annals of the Hotel-Dieu, written by a contemporary nun: "They (her four companions) have been, with her, the worthy founders of the Congregation, toiling night and day at sewing and cutting, in order to dress the women and clothe the savages, teaching in the schools at the same time.

Sister Crolo's charge was the care of the farm, in which she consumed her strength and her years and was thereby most useful to her sisters; washing clothes in the day, after having mended them by night,

baking the bread, indefatigable at work always, yet looking upon herself as the last of all and the servant of the house."

It were tedious to give a detailed account of the system of teaching adopted by the new Community. Children were received as soon as they could learn, that seeds of good might be sown while their hearts were still candid and docile.

Out of Margaret's ardent love for Jesus in the Eucharist and her tender affection for her pupils came a special solicitude for children who were preparing for First Communion. As the great day drew nearer, she redoubled her watchful care with an unwearying devotion for each of the souls so soon to be living tabernacles.

One writer says:—"The first pupils united to piety an ease of manner and a gentle, modest freedom that were attributed to the uncloistered life of the Sisters." So strong was Margaret's uplifting influence that, according to Père Charlevoix, the women of the colony were superior to the men. Long after her death, he says: "If, to this day, there prevail in Canada so great a gentleness in the manners of all classes of society and so much charm in the intercourse of life, it is owing in great measure to the zeal of Sister Bourgeoys." \*

Her eyes looked far below the surface of things into their real meaning and scope; she saw thus clearly

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\* P. Charlevoix, *Histoire du Canada*.

not only the present, but also the future and its probable needs. When she drew into her classes little pupils both white and red, when she sought to mould their minds and wills, she saw not only the children she was actually teaching, but also the future generations they were destined to influence, either directly or indirectly. In educating the young, her aim was to prepare good Christian families, then, a truly Christian society, and as a final result of the present labor, a great Christian country. With this end in view, she refused to allow her Community to be cloistered, for if it were cloistered, how could she and her companions go out to the people and help them in their spiritual or temporal need? She foresaw also that a more untrammelled manner of living and teaching would be more suitable to a young country.

Margaret's zeal was not centered exclusively in the little ones of the colony; it embraced as well the older girls for the improvement of whose minds little or nothing was being done. To protect and guide those of maturer years was in her eyes a most important work, and she often urged her daughters to devote themselves to it with faithful perseverance. For their benefit she founded a Sodality of Children of Mary by which she could reach young women who were too old to mingle with the children in the classes. Its first meeting was held on the 2nd of July, 1658. \*

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\* This Congregation, or gathering gave its name, say some historians, to Mother Bourgeoys' entire Community.

"During the voyage with Mademoiselle Mance, besides the young girls joining our Community, there were also several 'filles du roi,' sent out by the king from France, girls of high principles and destined to help to colonize this country. Some years after, while the house lately bought from St. Ange was being repaired, there came to Montreal for the same purpose a band of seventeen or eighteen young girls. As they were to be the mothers of future families, I thought it only right that they should be brought together in a safe place, and that of all others, the Blessed Virgin's house ought to be opened to her children. Full of this idea, and scarcely waiting to consult the sisters, I hastened to the shore to meet these girls and to take them to our house. It was too small to accommodate them all. It was therefore necessary to take them to the little house bought from St. Ange, where I was obliged to stay some time with them to give them the necessary instruction." \*

About the same time a boarding school was opened for children of the wealthier class and an "ouvroir" or industrial school for the poorer girls of the colony. The latter was aptly named "La Providence," and here Margaret Bourgeoys taught her charges how to work, but above all, how to sanctify their work and make it contribute, not solely to the sustenance of

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\* *Memoirs of Margaret Bourgeoys.*



their bodies, but likewise to the strength and growth of their souls.

We have alluded to the hard, laborious lot of women in the new colony. One can well imagine that the young girls sent out by the King were little fitted for this kind of work. Many would never have held out had it not been for Margaret Bourgeoys and her companions, who taught them to cut and sew and bake, and, after their marriage, cared for their children and cheered the mothers in sorrow and utter discouragement. History does not say whether Sister Bourgeoys housed the "*filles du roi*" who had come with her from France in 1659, as she certainly did later, or whether they were received in the Governor's house, but she certainly continued to care for them and instruct them in Ville-Marie as she had done during the passage out. One after the other was married to some shy settler who had come to ask for a wife, and she left the convent or the fort to go to be mistress of a tiny log-cabin. One cannot help smiling at this summary match-making, but Margaret Bourgeoys and de Maisonneuve were both very wise, and both knew their charges well, so they possibly made a better choice than the young people could have done for themselves. At all events, there was no question afterwards of "*incompatibility of temper.*" The fate of these poor young orphans, many of whom were of noble, or, at least, of gentle birth, brought up in the French "*Hôpitaux*" and then

bundled off to marry men whom they had never set eyes upon, seems a most strange and cruel one. Very little is known of them, beyond their names, previous to their being sent to Canada. The dates of the marriages may be seen in the contracts kept on file in Montreal, most of which bear Mother Bourgeoys' small, neat signature, and are dated from the "parloir de la Congrégation." These strangely contracted marriages turned out happily, for the little French girls became good, brave wives — thanks, in great measure, to Mother Bourgeoys' influence.

This blessed influence was maintained over her former pupils and protégées long after they had homes of their own. Indeed, the most recent examination of obituary certificates kept in the archives of the Church of Notre Dame, Montreal, proves that the motherly care of Mother Bourgeoys did not cease at the period when real mothers too often consider their responsibilities ended. She watched over the girls she had trained and prepared for the grave duties of married life as long as they needed her affectionate solicitude. They returned to her hospitable roof even after marriage. Thus, there is a record, and a very touching one it is, of the death at the Congregation of an infant only four days old and of its mother, aged nineteen.

Knowing how easily fervor may give way to tepidity, Margaret brought her former pupils together yearly for a short retreat. Wives and mothers and

young girls, both rich and poor, came back to their teachers to learn again the great lessons of piety, fidelity to duty, and generous self-denial. To this day these retreats are a cherished tradition in the Congrégation de Notre Dame.

## CHAPTER X.

A FORLORN HOPE — AGGRESSIVE IROQUOIS — DOLLARD'S BRAVE SCHEME — HOW HEROES PREPARE FOR DEATH — THE OATH — LAST FAREWELLS — THE ENCOUNTER — THE SIEGE — THE BLOCKADE — DESERTION BY ALLIES — FATAL EXPLOSION — DOLLARD'S DEFEAT SAVES THE COLONY.

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**W**E have now come to the year 1660, destined to witness the most glorious exploit in the annals of Canada; the famous encounter between French and Iroquois at the foot of the Long Sault rapids.

Though not immediately connected with Margaret Bourgeoys, this event cannot be passed over in silence. It not only occurred during her lifetime, but she had shared for years the life of its heroes. We may even cherish the thought that her influence had something to do with it; many of these youths had been her companions during the first journey to Canada; she had nursed some of them with untiring devotion during a long, fever-darkened sea-voyage and had gently turned their thoughts heavenward, inspiring a nobler impulse than mere youthful enthusiasm, love of adventure, or thirst for glory. Later, during the

strenuous life at Ville-Marie, when they stood in need of womanly help or counsel, when they had a quarrel to mend or a doublet to patch, they came to wise Sister Bourgeoys, and she, in turn, often claimed their aid to build, or draw, or fell.

Ever since the defeat and almost total annihilation of their hereditary foes, the Hurons, the small bands of Iroquois that infested the country had grown bolder and more aggressive. Their number increased. Not a day passed without some Iroquois being discovered skulking behind trees, seeking an opportunity for mischief. Numerous treaties, concluded between French and Iroquois chiefs, were not considered binding by individuals, as any accident — a personal grievance, real or imaginary, a portentous dream, the sudden rage of drunkenness or mere caprice — might bring a handful of braves down upon an isolated, unprepared homestead, spreading fire and bloodshed.

The whole colony was in suspense, dreading every moment a sudden inroad of screeching, howling cannibals. None dared open a door at night, nor even walk a few steps in broad daylight without gun or pistol. He who went fifty paces from his house carried his life in his hands. But fields must be tilled and harvests reaped, even if watered with blood, for the worse foe, famine, must be kept at bay. So life went on as usual, except that every man held himself ready to appear before God. Life was prayerful

and earnest in New France, and crimes among the colonists were few.

In Ville-Marie hot heads were growing deadly weary of inaction, of the prospect of sudden death in ambush, or the longer horror of captivity and torture at the hands of inhuman fiends. Something must be done to intimidate the enemy. There were at the time in the settlement about one hundred and forty fighting men, of whom fifty were married.

The commandant of the garrison was a youth of twenty-five, Adam Dollard, sometimes written Daulac, *Sieur des Ormeaux*, brave, adventurous, and persevering, who is said to have come to Canada with the avowed purpose of distinguishing himself in some glorious adventure. He it was who conceived the idea of striking one great blow that would shatter the Iroquois force.

So far the French had never been the aggressors.\* De Maisonneuve had sternly upheld the policy of prudence and dogged resistance. Lives were too precious to be wasted in foolhardy attack.

Now that a few men might be spared, Dollard proposed to meet the large body of Indians returning from their hunting grounds up the Ottawa, engage them in a death struggle and so cripple their forces that quiet might be assured for some time at least. A very few Frenchmen, armed and protected, thus

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\* If we except Champlain's famous expedition with the Hurons up Lake Champlain in 1609.

surprising the enemy, could make great havoc in their ranks. It was a desperate, a heroic plan. But it was a heroic age, and Dollard's enthusiasm swept through the garrison.

Sixteen young men clasped hands with their officer and swore to sell their lives and sell them dearly for the good of all. Among them, some were soldiers, others artisans, and a few, simple settlers; none were much over thirty, their ages ranging from twenty-one to thirty-one. More would have joined them had they but been willing to wait. Dollard, however, would not delay; no time was to be lost.

With grief-laden hearts the colonists watched these men, inspired by youth and hope, prepare for battle and prepare for death. Each wrote his will, the quaint originals of which are still extant; and having all received absolution, they came together to receive Holy Communion, truly their Viaticum.

The cool, sweet air of an early spring comes in light gusts through the open windows of the Hotel-Dieu chapel, which is filled to the doors with sturdy colonists. The gay sunlight gleams on altar and vestment, and falls on heads bowed in subdued sorrow, or upturned faces bright with unwonted fervor.

Between the railing, with its Communion cloth of snowy white and the crowd behind, our seventeen young men, fully armed, kneel side by side; each face set in the stern lines of unflinching resolve, each eye bright with the flash of enthusiasm. Behind

them, among the worshippers, mastered by the same powerful emotion, are seen the serious countenance and knightly bearing of de Maisonneuve, the strong face of Charles Lemoyne, the stalwart form of Lambert Closse, the brave Major of Ville-Marie, who gazes at his young brothers-in-arms with something akin to envy. Jeanne Mance is there also, praying with downcast eyes, and Margaret Bourgeoys' fair face appears, pure as an angel's, gentle and kind as a mother's, while she calls down Heaven's blessing upon this enterprise, and grace and strength upon the hearts of its unflinching heroes.

The solemn silence is broken only by the low, reverent tones of the priest, and sometimes by a smothered sob from a heart-broken mother. At the priest's Communion, there is a stir in the chapel; the seventeen young men kneel at the altar-rail. After receiving with tender devotion the Bread of Heaven, the Strength of Martyrs, the youths rise and stand, strong and calm, facing the altar.

Adam Dollard's deep, musical voice rings out clear and unwavering, as with uplifted hand, he slowly pronounces the solemn oath. His companions repeat the pledge that binds them to fight the Iroquois to the death, neither craving quarter nor granting it.

There were brief, heart-broken leave-takings, and, on April 19th, the canoes turned slowly up the stiff current. Scarce had they paddled a mile when they met a little party of Iroquois near St. Paul's Island.



A sharp skirmish ensued, the enemy was driven off, but of the band of Frenchmen, one had been killed and two were drowned. Sadly the canoes were turned homeward, for Dollard had resolved to bring his comrades' bodies back for Christian burial.

Next morning the colonists met in the chapel for another more impressive ceremony. A solemn service was chanted for the dead soldiers. Around the coffins knelt the survivors, grieving for their comrades and saying for their own souls the final prayers of the Church.

Once more the canoes glided away over the blue waters, brave young voices rising in a hymn which, like a last farewell, came sweetly back to the gazing colonists on the shore. They passed up the blue St. Lawrence, and, turning to the right, encountered the downward flow of ice at St. Anne. After a week's delay, they swept into the grand lake of Two Mountains with its pine groves and undulating hills on the one side and graceful elms and oaks on the other. On, on, until Carillon was passed, until the mighty roar of waters rose high above the lapping of waves and the murmur of forests; until the great rocks and foaming rapids came into sight. There at the foot of Long Sault, five or six miles above Carillon, they paused, probably at a place now called Greece Point.

Here they found a deserted and half-ruined lodge built by the Algonquin hunters the preceding year.

This frail little fortress crowned a slope covered with graceful elms and maples and stately pines. They were soon joined by a friendly party of thirty-nine Hurons under Anahotaha, and by four Algonquins. Most of these Indian allies were Christians who had volunteered to join forces with the French.\* Together they waited two or three days. "Morning and noon and night, they prayed in three different tongues; and when at sunset the long reach of forest on the farther shore basked peacefully in the level rays, the rapids joined their hoarse music to the note of their evening hymn."†

One evening, as the last rays of the setting sun cast golden ripples on the troubled waters and lighted up the thick forest on the other shore, the doomed men knelt in prayer. Around them lay the unpeopled wilderness of trees; before them, the river, foaming and angry after its battle with the slippery boulders of the fall. Besides their earnest tones, only two sounds broke the stillness, but these two of Nature's grandest, most mysterious voices; the voice of waters, the steady deep-mouthed roar of a fall; and the voice of the wind, now moaning and sighing, now softly murmuring through the great trees in the depths of a virgin forest. Never had their prayers been so fervent, for they felt that the hour of combat was near

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\* According to the author of the *Petit Registre*, there took part in the fight at Long Sault, 61 French and Indians and 800 Iroquois. p. 44.

† Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 76.

at hand. Soon a small advance guard of the enemy was sighted, shot at and dispersed. Innumerable canoes glided swiftly down the rapids, landed, and the French and allied Indians had barely time to crowd into the fort before three hundred hideously painted Iroquois were upon them with diabolical warwhoops. So warmly were they received that they retreated in disorder, leaving many dead behind.

Seeing that victory would not be so easy, they set about building a fort in the wood. This gave the French time hurriedly to strengthen their palisades with a row of stakes, filling up the gaps with earth and stones.

These preparations were not completed when there came a wild rush of Iroquois with burning brands, fragments of the destroyed French and Indian canoes. A well-directed volley from the loopholes drove them back in confusion. They rallied, and twice again they tried to rush the fort, only to be balked each time in their attempt. The French had not lost a man; the Iroquois dead strewed the ground; the enemy's yells grew more fiend-like when they saw above the jagged stakes of the palisades the ghastly heads of their fallen comrades around that of their favorite chief. Apparently discouraged, the Iroquois retreated behind logs and tree-trunks, keeping up, however, an incessant fire of arrows and bullets. The siege had been exchanged for a blockade.

Within the fort, Dollard and his men, resting neither night nor day, grew gaunt and weak; for three enemies, more terrible even than the Iroquois, were daily sapping their strength — lack of sleep, lack of food, lack of water. The Frenchmen could only moisten their parched lips in the few drops of water that oozed through a muddy hole dug in the earthen wall of the fort. Once they had rushed to the river's edge, but there were no vessels to carry back a supply of water. The Hurons' ammunition had run out and they had to take from the Frenchmen's provision, when a renegade Huron left the Iroquois ranks and parleyed with his brothers in the fort. He told them they must die unless they joined them. Summoned by a swift messenger, an army of five hundred men was now on its way from the Richelieu to join the enemy's forces. The French and Algonquins knew what to expect from an Iroquois promise, and continued to fight and pray as men fight and pray only when face to face with inevitable death. The fickle Hurons were deceived, and first one, then another, then groups of four or five slipped over the walls, leaving only their brave old chief, Annahotaha, and the four staunch Algonquins. This reduced the garrison to nineteen.

Suddenly, on the sixth day of this awful blockade, the green woods resounded with a deafening whoop, the long vistas filled with leaping, painted figures, the reserve of the Iroquois was upon them. There

were fourteen white men and five Indians against seven hundred warriors! Rush followed rush. The Iroquois drew a little nearer each time, but the muskets repulsed them and bloody corpses rose in ghastly heaps in the clearing.

Reeling with exhaustion, Dollard and the thinning ranks of his followers held out for three days. At last the Iroquois, dispirited and well-nigh discouraged, assembled their chiefs in council. The French, they concluded were demons, and invincible. Many warriors were tired and sighed for their lodges. Older men were made desperate by the thought that the unconquered Iroquois were to be defeated by a handful of French. It was finally decided that one more desperate attempt would be made.

The bravest men volunteered, and making great shields with faggots, rushed upon the wooden palisades, reached them, and crouching beneath the range of muskets, hacked at the walls until they succeeded in breaking through. Sword, and knife or hatchet in hand, Dollard and his men rushed to the breaches fighting for their lives. One after another fell beneath an Iroquois tomahawk only to be replaced by his comrade. Dollard hastily crammed a large musketoon with powder and grape, attached a lighted fuse, and threw it towards the Iroquois. But it struck an overhanging branch and fell back into the fort, where it exploded, killing one and wounding many.

Heroic Dollard fell back, dead, just as the enemy, firing a murderous volley, rushed into the fort from every side. The few survivors, back to back, and still fighting, were shot down, and the ten days' struggle was over. The Iroquois force, decimated and thoroughly discouraged, broke up into small detachments and turned into the gloomy forest.

Dollard's defeat achieved more than has been gained by many victories. He was the unconscious instrument in the hands of Providence for the salvation of New France. On the seventeenth of May, Quebec was thrown into a panic of terror on hearing from a captive Iroquois that some twelve hundred of the Five Nations were gathering below Ville-Marie to overwhelm Quebec, then Three Rivers and Montreal. This was the army that broke its strength against the little fort of Long Sault. Had Dollard not met it before that date, Quebec, with its scattered houses and unsuspecting inhabitants, would have been the scene of a massacre that would have rivalled the most tragic pages of colonial history.

A fortnight later, very near the chapel before whose altar the commandant had vowed to give his life for Ville-Marie, an escaped Indian recounted in his picturesque language, to the colonists gathered around him, how Dollard had fought and died. Gratitude filled all hearts, for now they knew that truly he had saved the Colony, and they greeted the tidings of his

glorious defeat with the triumphant music of the "Te Deum."

The news comes to Sister Bourgeoys, and her heart, noble enough to understand the sublimity of such a sacrifice, thrills with emotion at the glorious tale. She does not grieve for those youths whom she loved as a mother, for she knows that they died not as mere heroes, but as heroic Christians.

Doubtless this wonderful interposition of Divine Providence may be attributed to the prayers of Mother Bourgeoys and other holy souls both in Quebec and Ville-Marie. In this we may see the fulfilment of Père Lallemant's words: "My fourth source of consolation in this afflicted country is the generosity and courage of our nuns — they also lead me to hope for the preservation of the country, as I cannot think that God would abandon souls such as these, so holy and charitable. It rather seems to me that all the saints in Paradise would come to their help, were it to happen that men should fail in preserving their life in this New World."

## CHAPTER XI.

NOT IN VAIN — HOSTILITIES RENEWED — A HERO-  
INE OF VILLE-MARIE — SURROUNDED BY FOES —  
IROQUOIS OUTRAGES — THE WONDERFUL HAND-  
KERCHIEF — LAMBERT CLOSSE — 1663 — VILLE-  
MARIE LOSES ITS FOUNDER — THE HEROIC AGE  
ENDED — A NEARER VIEW — THE CONGREGA-  
TION IN 1669 — A PUBLIC TRIBUTE — A PASTORAL  
VISIT — MORE WORKERS REQUIRED — BACK TO  
FRANCE.

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**N**OT in vain had seventeen young lives been cut down in all the vigor of their springtide. A pause ensued, and the colonists had time to breathe a space before taking up the burden of haunting suspense and death-encompassed lives.

Dollard's bold blow had shattered the Confederation of the Five Nations and stopped the projected invasion as surely as the mighty cliff stops the in-rushing wave. But even his great sacrifice could only hinder for a time, not quell forever, the savage warfare. The now separated tribes began to fight each on its own account, hope of ultimate revenge goading them on to fiercer efforts. For the time being, however, the



course of the Ottawa was free, and the Iroquois, though everywhere astir, seemed rather cowed by their recent losses.

Nevertheless, bands of hostile Indians soon spread over the colony. One day, Maisonneuve took into custody sixteen Iroquois, who had asked to parley. In the autumn, six hundred savages of various tribes came down upon Montreal, intent on murder and rapine; but, hearing of their allies' captivity, swiftly turned back, abandoning all their projects.\*

In the early months of 1661, the Iroquois gathered in large numbers around the constantly harassed settlement. One day, in chill February, some colonists were working on the edge of the outlying forests. Attacks being rare at this season, the laborers were unarmed and free from any apprehension. A chorus of yells, a vision of leaping, painted bodies, a glitter of sharp knives — the enemy was upon them! A moment of hopeless, desultory fighting, and thirteen prisoners were in the clutches of the Iroquois. The rest of the party gave up the unequal conflict, and sped for their lives towards the fort, their retreat covered by Charles Lemoyne who steadily faced the foe with a cocked pistol in each hand. The lithe savages, however, were gaining on the pursued, and a fierce rush would soon overpower a single armed man. A woman's presence of mind saved the day. Safe

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\* "Vie de Maisonneuve," chap. 23, p. 161. P. Rousseau P.S.S.

within the fort, Madame Duclos had been drawn to a loop-hole by the noise of the conflict. One look was enough, she caught up rifles and ammunition, breathed a short prayer, unbarred the ponderous door, and ran, with stumbling steps, towards the flying band, friend and foe now separated only by a few short paces. Eager hands soon relieved her of her heavy burden. Weapons in hand, the men turned upon their baffled pursuers, and soon, scattered by a sharp volley, the whole troop of Iroquois sought shelter in the woods. So was Ville-Marie saved by one woman's promptness and courage.\*

Spring deepened into summer, and never had hearts been so heavy. Already, twenty-six Frenchmen from Ville-Marie had been either killed or carried into a captivity worse than death. The *Relation* of this year says of the Iroquois: "These hobgoblins sometimes appeared at the edge of the wood, assailing us with abuse; sometimes they glided stealthily into the midst of the fields to surprise the men at work; sometimes they approached the houses, harassing us without ceasing, and, like importunate harpies or birds of prey, swooping down on us whenever they could take us unawares." †

One advantage resulted from this arduous life, as Dollier de Casson writes: "God — made a marvellous use of these calamities to hold the people firm in

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\* Ferland, *Histoire du Canada*. p. 467.

† Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 467.

their duty towards Heaven. Vice was then almost unknown here, and in the midst of war, religion flourished on all sides in a manner very different from what we now see in times of peace."† A simple, earnest, prayerful life, begun each day at the foot of the altar and spent face to face with possible, nay, probable death, was the life at Ville-Marie at the time the historian describes.

It had its festivals and holidays, its pure joys, all the sweeter because they blossomed in innocent and truly pious hearts. The welfare of each settler, his spiritual and temporal needs, were carefully safeguarded and fostered by the Sulpicians, by de Maisonneuve, until his untimely departure, and by Jeanne Mance and Margaret Bourgeoys, who were always consulted in the most important as in the most trifling affairs of the colony. \*

Meanwhile, Our Lady protected her daughters in a marvellous manner. The Iroquois were not excluded from the town, in the hope that a few might be brought to the light of faith. While they roamed without in quest of fresh victims, Margaret Bourgeoys' little Community, tranquil and undismayed, toiled through all the long days in the small classes, teaching and training the children of Ville-Marie. \*\* In the stillness of the night, while a dim light shone

† Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 110

\* P. Rousseau, P.S.S., *Vie de Maisonneuve*, p. 260.

\*\* P. Rousseau, P.S.S., *Vie de Maisonneuve*, p. 264.

faintly, showing where Margaret and her sisters were curtailing their needed sleep for longer work, or when secure under Mary's protection, they took a few hours of well-earned rest, dark figures slipped over the palisades, crawled noiselessly through the shadowy yard, and there crouched like beasts of prey. Until the dawn paled the eastern sky, those dark forms would lie and wait, kept back by some mysterious, God-sent dread, but always hoping an unsuspecting victim would emerge from the silent house. This hope was ever vain, and when they rose and departed as silently as they had come, it was with a still unquenched thirst for blood. How often the sisters rose with the sun and entered cheerfully on another day of toil, little dreaming by what blood-thirsty sentinels their slumbers had been watched! \*

On the twenty-ninth day of August, Feast of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, Jacques Lemaître, a priest of Saint Sulpice, while acting as sentinel for the harvesters who were at work on Saint Gabriel's farm, was treacherously shot down by a band of ambushed Iroquois. Margaret Bourgeoys relates a marvellous fact about this martyred priest. "It is said," she tells us, "that the imprint of M. Lemaître's face was so distinctly outlined on the handkerchief in which the savages had carried away their victim's head, that it could easily be recognized.

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\* Sausseret, "Eloge historique," p. 37.

Some time after, when I was preparing to go to France, it occurred to me to ascertain the real truth of this matter, that I might speak positively should inquiries be made on the subject. I went, therefore, to find Lavigne, who had been brought back from captivity in the Iroquois' country, where the fiends had torn off one of his fingers. He assured me that the account of the impression of the Father's face was perfectly true — he had seen it, and had endeavored to induce the Iroquois to sell the handkerchief, but they would accept none of his offers, saying they would use it as a flag when they went to battle to make them invincible.”\*

This marvel is also described on the authority of Lavigne by Sister Morin and Dollier de Casson. The annals of the Hotel-Dieu add that a Jesuit, captured by a more distant tribe, heard of the prodigy from the savages themselves, who spoke of it as an extraordinary experience. Later, they became so much afraid of the mysterious handkerchief, with its fine clear-cut outline of their victim's face, that they sold it to the English, threatening them with dire punishment if it ever fell into Jesuit hands. These threats were so effectual that nothing more was ever heard of it by any of the French priests or colonists.

Fighting, toiling, praying, the colonists saw harvest-time follow the Summer. They were allowed to gather in the grain unmolested. But gloom settled

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\* Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*.

over Ville-Marie, when the news came of de Lauzon's awful fate. The young seneschal of New France had been killed on a reconnoitring expedition by a party of ambushed Iroquois.

In October, the brave chief Garecontia, an Indian by birth and by breeding, but a Christian at heart and a hero in conduct, brought back nine liberated prisoners to Ville-Marie. The grand old chief was proclaimed by the grateful settlers "the Frenchman's father," and sent back to his lodge loaded with gifts. This little rift in the cloudy sky closed into a deeper gloom when the Iroquois, only a few weeks later, captured M. Vignal, a Sulpician, in the Isle à Pierre. There, with a few companions led by the heroic de Brigeac, he had gone to get stone for building. Claude de Brigeac lived to suffer, with a martyr's patience, the most barbarous tortures; but Vignal, being wounded unto death while endeavoring to escape, was killed almost immediately, and his body, burned at the stake, was devoured by the inhuman cannibals.

Each season of this sadly eventful year had been marked by some disaster; Winter brought perhaps the sorest loss for Ville-Marie in the death of gallant Lambert Closse, "a man," says Parkman, "whose intrepid coolness was never known to fail in the direst extremity." Going to the aid of a party of laborers, attacked by the Iroquois, he was met by a crowd of savages, eager to kill or capture him. His servant ran off. He snapped a pistol at the foremost

assailant but it missed fire. His remaining pistol served him no better, and he was instantly shot down. "He died," writes Dollier de Casson, "like a brave soldier of Christ and the King." \*

The spring of 1663 brought a renewal of hostilities. Indians fought Indians within the very walls of the town. Even the sick at the Hotel-Dieu were to be dreaded, since one Iroquois, after being tenderly nursed by the nuns, turned upon one of them and tried to smother her as she stood between a door and a cupboard. The other patients hurried to the rescue, and the wily savage pretended that his ungrateful outrage had been a mere pleasantry!

The same year, when winter was drawing to a close, awful earthquakes shook the colony and terrified its inhabitants. Contemporary writers describe them as terrible in the extreme. "In the forest, the trees struck against one another; hills and large tracts of forest slid into the river and some into adjacent valleys." And these terrific phenomena were repeated until midsummer. The length of time they lasted, the extent of country visited and the manifest protection of Providence that shielded both French and Indians showed this upheaval to be a warning for the evil-doers of the colony. In Ville-Marie, where the settlers were devout and earnest, the wild panic that drove the people of Quebec to the confessionals was almost unfelt.

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\* Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 108.

In this year also, a notable one for Ville-Marie, the Island of Montreal was ceded to the Sulpicians by the Montreal Company. Maisonneuve then established, for the men of Ville-Marie, the *Milice de la Sainte Famille*. Madame d'Ailleboust, widow of the former Governor of New France, wishing to form a similar society into which women and children might also be admitted, consulted Père Chau-  
monot, who lived with the Sulpicians in the intervals of his apostolic journeyings. With Mr. Souart's warm approval, the *Société de la Sainte Famille* was founded on the 31st of July, Feast of St. Ignatius. The act drawn up on that date bears the signature of Margaret Bourgeoys, Madame d'Ailleboust, Jeanne Mance and Sister Crolo. This sodality, probably the oldest in Canada, soon spread over the colony, and as family after family inscribed its name on the list of membership, the virtues of Jesus, Mary and Joseph grew up and bore fruit throughout the land.

The year 1664 brought a sad loss to Ville-Marie and a deep grief to Mother Bourgeoys, since it robbed her of a trusted and loyal friend. De Tracy, the Vice-Roy with no better reason than prejudice, and jealousy of Maisonneuve's supreme authority over Ville-Marie, deprived the latter of his title and of his office. "They ordered him back to France as being incompetent for the position of Governor which he held here; this I could scarcely have believed had another than Sister Bourgeoys told me of it. He



took the command as an expression of God's will, and returned to France, not to complain of the bad treatment he was receiving, but to live there in lowliness and humility." Thus writes Sister Morin. Perhaps the best appreciations of de Maisonneuve are to be found in the work of a Protestant historian who speaks of him "as the pious and valiant Governor of Montreal to whom its successful defence is largely due." In another volume, he declares: "Quebec and Montreal are happy in their founders. Samuel de Champlain and Chom  dy de Maisonneuve are among the names that shine with a fair and honest lustre on the infancy of nations."\*

And still the years went by, much the same as those just described. In 1666, there came a quieter time for Ville-Marie. Not only was it protected by its excellent fortifications, but the Iroquois themselves were greatly intimidated by de Tracy's† vigorous campaign, carried into the heart of their own

\* Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America, etc.*, p. 275.

† Tracy, de—M. le Marquis de Tracy came to Canada as viceroy in 1665 at the head of a small army of regular troops, chiefly from the Carignan regiment most of the officers and soldiers of which settled in Canada. Before the end of that year he built forts at Sorel, Chambly and near St. John's on the Richelieu river. In January, 1666, he placed Mr. de Courcelles at the head of an expedition which went a little further than Albany in the present state of New York, but found the Iroquois gone on a distant raid, and had to return, after great loss from hunger and cold. In September, 1666, M. de Tracy himself at the head of 600 hundred soldiers of the Carignan regiment, six hundred Canadians and one

country. In fact, most historians fix this period as the close of the age truly called "*Heroic*," because it was indeed so marvellously prolific in gallant deeds and noble lives.

We have seen Margaret Bourgeoys ever foremost in affairs of state or religion, but we would do well to look more closely into her life as the first teacher of Ville-Marie. From the state of the city as well as from what Margaret Bourgeoys' biographers tell us, we can form an idea of her life at this time.

Toil, incessant, brain-wearying and strength-wearing, scarcely relinquished for the few brief hours of rest, usually taken on the hard ground; privations of all kinds, partly imposed by circumstances, but more voluntarily embraced, such was the outward aspect of this laborious and utterly unselfish existence. Only the serene expression of brow and eye told of the complete and unbroken union of Margaret's heart with Jesus through Mary. Her sisters followed closely in her footsteps, sharing her labors and striving to imitate her virtues. God's rarest blessings fell on those who worked so earnestly for Him — temporal

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hundred Hurons and Algonquins, marched into the territory of the Agniers Indians who had fled before his advance. M. de Tracy burnt their four villages and then marched back to Quebec. Although these expeditions did not exterminate, as they were intended to do, the Iroquois, and did not even prevent the latter from raiding the outposts of the French during forty subsequent years, they certainly struck terror into the heart of the Five Nations and made the situation of the colonists at Montreal more secure.

blessings as well as spiritual, for how, without his aid, could they have continued their task of teaching *gratuitously* all the children of Ville-Marie?

Dollier de Casson speaks thus of the Congregation nuns: "What I thought most admirable is that these women, without any means of their own and wishing to teach children gratuitously, acquired nevertheless, by God's blessing on their manual labor, and without being a burden to any one, several houses and farms on the island of Montreal."

The first grant of land received by the Congregation consisted of thirty acres near Lake St. Joseph. Later, through M. de Bretonvilliers, several others were conceded to them; thirty acres were cultivated and the revenue was sufficient to supply in part the wants of the Community.

The transformed stable of 1657 soon became too small for the nuns, the classes and the boarding school. A larger house was built on the same tract of land and another adjacent one bought, but even these two houses proved inadequate. In 1669, yielding to the urgent requests of her co-workers, Sister Bourgeoys consented to the erection of a still larger convent, built of stone, on the land adjoining the old stable. Later, she bitterly regretted the building of this large house: "In the trouble that oppressed me," says Mother Bourgeoys, "I promised to build a chapel in the Blessed Virgin's honor, and at the same instant, I felt immediate relief." In the meantime

Margaret had a wooden shed erected, a poor and simple shrine, but so devotional, say the annals of the Hotel-Dieu, that the people flocked there as to an assured refuge in every need. Several cures there effected were considered miraculous."

But we must go back a few years, and note several events which greatly influenced the standing of the Congregation.

In obedience to his instructions, Intendant Talon came to make a series of domiciliary visits in Montreal. The object of these is explained by Colbert in a letter to the Intendant: "——— seeing that nothing can better promote this end (the encouragement of the people to trade and industry) than entering into the details of their household and of all their personal affairs, it will not be amiss that he (the Sieur Talon) visit all the settlements, one after the other, to learn their true conditions, provide as much as possible for their wants, and performing the duty of a good head of a family, put them in the way of making some profit."\* To fulfil this mission he came to Montreal. In the course of his visitations he duly entered the Congregation convent and inquired into its rules, teaching and mode of life. The answers proved so satisfactory and the beneficial results of the sisters' work had been so apparent in all the homesteads previously visited, that Talon fully approved the Community. Moreover, he gave a most favorable

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\* Parkman: *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 259.

appreciation to Governor Courcelles, thus inducing the latter to add his own approbation to that of his subordinate.

Before this, however, Talon, to give more scope to Sister Bourgeoys' zeal, by establishing her Community on a more solid basis, authorized the people of Montreal to carry out a long-cherished design. Ten years had elapsed since Margaret Bourgeoys opened her first school, yet her community had no legal existence. The citizens of Ville-Marie had urged her to obtain letters-patent from Louis XIV., recognizing and approving the *Congrégation de Notre Dame*. This appeal Talon now authorized them to renew.

In the month of October the Seminary received a delegation of the citizens. The largest room was soon crowded and it was proposed that the King be asked to approve Sister Bourgeoys' order. The chief men of the town, the Sulpicians, Seigneurs of the Island, the Syndic for that year, soldiers, farmers and artisans, all came to give their testimony in favor of the humble nun. It was unanimously agreed that a petition be drawn up and presented to Louis XIV., asking him to approve the Congregation by letters-patent. This petition was signed by all the most prominent citizens, and with a full account of the proceedings, duly attested by a large number of signatures, the document was handed to Sister Bourgeoys.

As she knew the object of the meeting, we may be

very sure she was not present at it; the very thought of receiving such a public manifestation of respect and gratitude, would have been most repugnant to her humility.

Gratefully, but with an almost startled sense of surprise at seeing this palpable proof of the colonists' deep appreciation, Margaret received the petition—then laid it by, and soon forgot it completely. Her mind was too full of God and souls to dwell on such vain things as the esteem of men; besides, she counted implicitly on Providence for the spread and confirmation of her Community.

Two years had elapsed since the framing of the petition to the King in 1667. Each passing day drew Margaret into closer union with God, deepening her humility, perfecting her unbroken recollection and enlivening her zeal for souls. Outwardly, she was ever the wise counsellor whose opinion often determined, always influenced, the decisions of Montreal's rulers; the gentle teacher, to whom children clung as to the best of mothers; the kind sister, to whom her companions turned on every occasion for aid, comfort or advice—above all, the untiring worker, whose every moment was given up to others.

On the 16th of May, 1669, Monseigneur de Laval, titular Bishop of Petrea and Vicar-General of New France, made a visit to Ville-Marie. The doors of the Congrégation de Notre Dame were thrown open to him, and he saw the classes, the pupils, the teachers,

spoke to Margaret Bourgeoys herself, and he left the convent, poor and simple as it still was, filled with admiration for those who had done so great a work in the very midst of danger and privation. His admiration did not expend itself in vain words. He did what he could for the Community by approving it in his own handwriting, and authorizing Margaret Bourgeoys to spread her institute over a diocese whose extent now seems incredible, since it embraced all the French possessions in North America.

A year later, after mature deliberation, Sister Bourgeoys yielded to her director's advice, and agreed to leave Canada once more in order to consolidate her Community by obtaining letters-patent giving it legal status.

Another reason, more urgent even than this, prompted Margaret to undertake a journey so repugnant to her love of silence and retirement; no novices had applied for admission into the Congregation; and, as in 1658, the increase of population had necessitated a voyage to France, so in 1670 the scholars had become too numerous to be adequately taught by only five nuns. The Community must be reinforced; new members could certainly be found in France, therefore in France must they be sought.

The two missions were difficult; it were surer to go in person than to trust to correspondence only, so slow in those days. Besides, both demanded courage, patience and tact. Rather than impose so

heavy a burden on any of her sisters, Margaret, trampling under foot her tastes and inclinations, gave up, for how long she knew not, her well-loved labor, the companionship of her devoted sisters, the calm regularity of her prayerful life, and left Ville-Marie and the grief-stricken convent to travel down to Quebec, and begin from there her second journey to France.



## CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERRUPTED VOYAGE — ARRIVAL AT LA ROCHELLE — THE JOURNEY TO PARIS — IN THE CAPITAL — CONFIDENCE REWARDED — A VISIT TO DE MAISONNEUVE — A WONDERFUL MEETING — A FRIEND AT COURT — DUNKERQUE — LOUIS XIV. GRANTS LETTERS-PATENT — AN EXTRACT — THE SEARCH FOR NOVICES — SIX RECRUITS — PIERRE CHEVRIER, BARON DE FANCAMP — FROM PARIS TO ROUEN — WEARY WAITING — NOTRE DAME DES NEIGES — THE RETURN TO CANADA.

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SISTER BOURGEOYS had received letters of introduction from Father Souart, Superior of the Seminary, and from Father Perrot, curé of Ville-Marie. In Quebec, she further obtained the entire approbation of the highest authorities — the Governor, the Bishop, and the Intendant. Almost on her arrival there, she was obliged to go to the hospital, in which she spent several days, gentle and patient in sickness as in health. She tells us in her *Memoirs*: “On the day named for the departure, I was in pretty good health and had been to Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the Jesuits’ church.

As we were returning thence, the signal for embarkation was suddenly given, and the servant" to whom she had confided the box containing her clothes and papers "assuring me that all was in readiness, I went on board without waiting to make any preparations; once on board, I looked for my box, but it was nowhere to be found." It was too late to go back or even send to Quebec for it, so Sister Bourgeoys wrote to M. Dupuis, Major of the Montreal garrison, who was then in Quebec. The papers were forwarded to her in Paris, and the clothes were sent back to the nuns in Montreal. "So there I was," writes our heroine, "on board ship, without luggage, without clothes, without provisions, without even *ten sous* at my disposal — and the only woman on board. But there were in the vessel two priests who were to me a refuge and a consolation. A bag of tow and a coil of rope on deck were my bed during the whole crossing. It was not very long; in thirty-one days we arrived at La Rochelle."

When Margaret Bourgeoys stepped from the gangway to the shore, she was returning to her native land as a penniless stranger, not knowing where or how she was to obtain food and lodgings. In the midst of such difficulties Margaret's unswerving trust in Providence was always rewarded. Father de Fénelon, one of the priests who had crossed with her, lent her 50 livres; more than half of this went to secure a place in the Paris coach, the remainder was barely

sufficient to pay for food, lodging and clothes. "M. de Fénelon, Père Frémy, a Jesuit, who had proved a kind friend throughout the crossing, and a third priest who shared the carriage with them, obtained a place for me at a cheaper rate than usual; through their influence, I also got lower rates at the inns, where I took my meals alone. They often urged me to eat with them, but I always refused."

Then follow a few details of the trip from La Rochelle to Paris: "I used to leave the carriage only to spend the night at the inn, where I would buy something for my supper. The remnants I kept for the morrow's dinner, which I ate alone in the carriage, while my companions left it and went to dine. We always rose early that the journey might not be delayed; for the three priests never failed to say Mass each day before setting out, and I had the consolation of assisting at their three Masses." \*

The touching simplicity of this narrative cannot detract from its interest. On the contrary, it gives us a clear idea of the strength of Margaret's character. Could any one detect the least hint of complaint in this brief description of a journey the hardships of which seem so terrible to the spoilt traveller of to-day?

As soon as the coach reached Paris, Margaret Bourgeois hastened to the grand old church of Notre Dame, there to beg Our Lady's blessing on her enterprise. Kneeling before her statue, she renewed the

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\* *Vie de la Mère Bourgeois*, 1818, p. 104

consecration made by the members of the Montreal Company many years before, offering the Island of Montreal to be Mary's especial kingdom, and asking her to bless the labors of the *Congrégation de Notre Dame*. Already past the prime of life, simply, almost poorly dressed, worn by toil and privation, pale and wan after a long journey, that praying woman would perhaps have failed to arrest a careless glance. Had we been with her in the dim Cathedral, we might have scorned her lowly aspect, little dreaming that she had crossed the ocean to come to the brilliant court of Louis XIV., still less that many future generations would bless her as the benefactress of a whole continent. Yet, so it was. And, moreover, God, so blessed her endeavors that almost without human aid, each stage of this strange journey was fully successful.

That first night in Paris was spent in a shabby house with a poor woman of the Saint Sulpice quarter. Early next morning Margaret was kneeling before the tabernacle. A priest issued from the sacristy, bearing the Blessed Sacrament to some helpless invalid, and escorted by a few faithful followers. She joined the little procession, praying fervently as she walked close behind her beloved Master. The priest's way led to the very door of the Seminary. As the procession stopped, Margaret heard a small group of men talking earnestly. One of them, a priest, said that he had in his keeping a sum of money

due to a person whose whereabouts were unknown to him. So far, his remarks had fallen upon unheeding ears, but his next words caught her attention with startling distinctness. "I must remit this money," the priest went on, "to a certain Margaret Bourgeoys, but where I am to find her is a mystery to me." Drawing nearer, Sister Bourgeoys told him she had overheard his conversation, and that she herself was the very person he was seeking. A few words of explanation made the state of things perfectly clear, and the money was handed to its rightful owner.

Her letters had been left at the Seminary, and she now resolved to seek out Father Perrot's relatives and M. de Maisonneuve, as she had letters for them also. The curé's family, unfavorably impressed by their visitor's poverty, received her rather coldly. When Father Perrot's letter had been read, however, their feelings towards one whom he regarded as a saint changed completely. They pressed her to share their mid-day meal, waited upon her and loaded her with kindness, while treating her with a deep respect that gave the humble nun more pain than pleasure, and impelled her to decline an urgent invitation to lodge at their house.

From M. Perrot's house she went to M. de Maisonneuve's quarters, in the Fossés St. Victor. After a brief delay, the door was opened by de Maisonneuve himself. As he stood there looking out into the

gathering darkness, seeking to recognize his visitor, the traces of age and sorrow were visible in his careworn face. But, when his eyes fell on Sister Bourgeoys, a great joy leaped into them, he greeted her warmly, led her into his study, and questioned her eagerly about Montreal, its welfare, its inhabitants, without a trace of bitterness or resentment towards those who had driven him far from his cherished colony into a life of inactive retirement. Finally, having ascertained that Margaret had no definite place of abode, he told her, joyously, that Providence had prepared one for her. A short time before, he had built in his garden a small log-cabin like those used in Canada, intending to lodge any Canadian who might chance to visit him. Margaret readily accepted his offer, and that very day took possession of what was to be her little home during her stay in Paris. Maisonneuve took charge of all Sister Bourgeoys' business and proved a kind and helpful friend during her stay in France.

A few days after her arrival Sister Bourgeoys had another remarkable proof of Our Lady's protection. She was traversing the streets of Paris on one of the many expeditions necessitated by her quest for letters-patent. Her purse was very light, and funds were absolutely necessary. Still, the sharpest eye could have detected no sign of worry to mar the serenity of her expression. Suddenly, hurried steps sounded

on the pavement behind her, and a stranger, overtaking her, asked in breathless tones: "Would she be pleased to tell him if she knew a person, just out from Canada, named Margaret Bourgeoys?" "I am Margaret Bourgeoys," she answered, "what do you desire me to do for you?" "If you are the person I am seeking, this belongs to you," returned the man, placing in her hands a sum of money. At first Margaret refused the unexpected gift, but the stranger having explained that he was the man to whom she had lent 130 livres in his hour of need at Ville-Marie, she thanked God who sent this help in so singular a manner and at so opportune a moment.

Unfortunately, Sister Bourgeoys' *Memoirs* give no further details of her doings in Paris. This is a cause of great regret to her children; for, how much light these pages might throw on her character and how many beautiful lessons might be gathered from them. However, we do know that the members of the Montreal Company, mostly learned and saintly men, took a deep interest in her and helped her by word and deed. Her request came to the ears of the King who was favorably impressed and inclined to grant her petition without hesitation. But six months dragged on, and yet nothing was accomplished. Then Colbert, the former intendant of Mazarin's household, "a man whose energies matched his talents and who had preserved his rectitude in the midst of corruption,"\*

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\* Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 222.

took the case into consideration. The penetrating genius of one "who sought to drive France into paths of prosperity by the energy of an imperial will," \* saw what Margaret Bourgeoys' institute was destined to do for one of France's richest colonies by forming for Louis XIV., loyal and intelligent subjects. The Minister of Finance received Margaret courteously, his dark eyes looking at her keenly, yet not unkindly, from under his heavy black eyebrows and care-lined forehead. Having listened attentively to her petition, he promised to obtain the king's approval for the *Congrégation de Notre Dame*. The promise was faithfully kept.

May had come, the most beautiful month of Spring, so fair, and balmy in "la douce France." Louis XIV. with his court was at Dunkerque. This fortified sea-port, a mere speck on the map of Europe, has a history that might well be envied by many a larger town. Built by Baldwin of Flanders on the sandhills that surrounded a church† erected in 690 by St. Eligius, it passed by inheritance to Charles V. of Spain and subsequently experienced a bewildering succession of French and English conquests, for no sooner was it clutched by one rival than it was snatched away by the other. In 1662 Louis XIV. bought it from England. Some years later, it was

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\* Parkman. *The Old Régime in Canada*.

† Hence its name, "Dun-kerque, (in English, Dunkirk) —Eglise des dunes," kirk or church of the sandhills.



made still more illustrious by one of its sons, Jean Bart, the fisherboy, who was raised by his valor to be the equal of the haughty nobles of the French navy.

But if Dunkerque naturally suggests these historical reminiscences, the date 1671 evokes others of a different nature. While Margaret Bourgeoys was journeying in her native land, in the midst of fatigue and privations, seeking only to assure the future of her Community, a girl of twenty-three, another Margaret, also a daughter of France was entering upon the humble life of a Visitation nun. Then seemingly but an ordinary novice, she was one day to be known and loved throughout the Catholic world, from all parts of which pilgrims were to come and pray at her grave in the now famous, but once insignificant little town of Paray-le-Monial — the cradle of devotion to the Sacred Heart, of which Blessed Margaret Mary was first the disciple and later the ardent apostle.

To return to Margaret Bourgeoys. She is no longer in Paris, but in Dunkerque itself, whither she has followed the king. Into the brilliant assemblage of youth, wealth and beauty, amid the throng of courtiers with leonine wigs, gay in silks and velvets and costly lace, came the lowly, pure-hearted nun in her travel-stained garments, coarse of texture and sombre of hue. She had no thought of self, no curiosity nor admiration for the strange, dazzling world

into which duty led her — unconscious of all around— she passed among the extravagant splendors of the court of him whom all Europe called “The King.” If glances of idle curiosity or arrogant contempt followed her as she went; if words of scornful raillery flew from lip to lip as she passed groups of frivolous chatterers, they fell, harmless, on unseeing eyes and unheeding ears, never so much as reaching the heart they were powerless to hurt.

Colbert’s influence made itself felt at last. Louis granted his royal approbation and signed the letters-patent in May, 1671. Not content with this proof of his esteem for Sister Bourgeoys, the Minister caused them to be immediately registered in the Parliament of Paris and then wrote to Talon urging him to favor the *Congrégation de Notre Dame* as an institute that would contribute powerfully to the spread of religion in Canada. When the great Minister gave the example his inferiors were not slow to follow suit. In the different offices Margaret met with nothing but respect and kindness, and the secretary who drew up the letters-patent would not even accept the usual fee.

These letters, a priceless treasure to the religious of her Community, speak most highly of Margaret Bourgeoys and her work. It is a joy for all who love the *Congrégation de Notre Dame* and its saintly Foundress to read the approval of the “*roi soleil*” in the brightest days of the “*grand siècle*.” Too long

to be quoted in full, we transcribe a part of this precious document as it appears in the original, bearing the seal and autograph of Louis XIV.

“Our beloved Margaret Bourgeoys, a native of our town of Troyes in the province of Champagne, has most humbly represented that much time has elapsed since God inspired her with the desire to advance the Catholic Faith by the education of persons of her own sex, both French and Indian, in New France, whither she repaired for this purpose as early as the year 1653. Having settled in the Island of Montreal with several other maidens, she has there followed the calling of a school mistress, teaching young girls gratuitously all the trades by which they are enabled to earn their livelihood; and with such success, by the continual grace of Divine Providence that neither the aforesaid petitioner nor her Community is in any manner a burden to the country, having built at her own expense, in the aforesaid Island of Montreal, two buildings suitable for her work, and caused several concessions of land to be cultivated and a farm-house to be erected with all things necessary thereto. The establishment thus formed has since been approved by His Lordship, the Bishop of Petrea, Vicar Apostolic; by the Sœur de Courcelle, our Lieutenant-general in Canada, and by the Sieur de Talon, Intendant of Justice, Police and Finance, as well as by the resolutions of an assembly held by the inhabitants of the aforesaid place; by reason of

which the aforesaid petitioner has been advised, for the common good of the aforesaid Island, to request us to grant her our letters of confirmation for the aforesaid establishment, under the title of "Congrégation de Notre Dame.

"—— We do confirm by these presents, signed by our own hand, the establishment of the aforesaid Congrégation de Notre Dame in the aforesaid Island of Montreal under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, nor shall they be exposed to molestation under any pretext whatever."\*

One of the two objects of Margaret Bourgeoys' journey had, by the grace of God and the visible protection of the Blessed Virgin, been most successfully attained; the second, and, in some respects, the more difficult, she now turned to with her usual strength and unswerving singleness of purpose. We know nothing of her journeyings in search of novices. But, with her wise old biographer, † we may follow her in imagination, as we would fain have done in fact, in her search through the towns of France, but more especially in her own birth-place, Troyes. "We should have seen her," he says, "often on foot, sometimes burdened with her scant wardrobe; or else in public conveyances, always more disagreeable to

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\* Archives quoted by M. Faillon; *vie de M. Bourgeoys* Vol. I, p. 221.

† Author of *Life* published in 1818—M. l'Abbé Montgolfier P.S.S.

her than the hardest and most fatiguing high roads, because of the indiscreet and licentious company sometimes met therein; though, by her simple and modest demeanor, her words of apostolic unction and zeal, and by a thousand edifying practices, she knew full well how to inspire respect in the most dissolute, and to convert these journeys, perilous to one of ordinary virtue, into missions both useful to her neighbor and sanctifying to herself. While, through a spirit of poverty, humility and mortification, virtues she possessed in an eminent degree, she refused herself every satisfaction, she was liberal and generous to excess when the glory of God or the exercise of charity were in question; perfectly poor and possessing nothing, the fruit of her labors was a fund for the destitute. Providence, therefore, never failed her when in pressing necessity."

The loving Master Whose example was ever before her eyes, as, she went from town to town in search of laborers for the vineyard, rewarded Sister Bourgeoys by giving light and strength to six girls who left all to walk in her apostolic footsteps. Some years later the following names appeared in a list with those of the former sisters as belonging to her Community; there is no doubt, that those who bear these names followed Margaret in 1672: Elizabeth de la Bertache, Madeleine de Constantin, Thérèse Soumillard, Perrette Laurent, Geneviève Durosoy, Marguerite Soumillard.

Several belonged to noble families; but on entering the little Community they wished to give up forever not home and country alone, but also rank and name. For this reason they were known henceforth only by their Christian names. This example was not lost on their successors; to this day Margaret Bourgeoys' daughters relinquish their own name to assume that of some saint or some mystery.

Margaret's work in France was done. She had been away from her convent two whole years and was eager to lead her charges to their home. Before leaving Paris, however, she saw the members of the Montreal Company, several of whom had helped her in various ways during her stay in France. One of these, Pierre Chevrier, Baron de Fancamp, formerly Seigneur and proprietor of the Island of Montreal, offered to pay her passage home. Sister Bourgeoys refused, adding, however, that she would be grateful for the gift of a statue to be placed in the chapel she hoped to build. De Fancamp promised to give her one, and Margaret took leave of him. The time fixed for her departure had almost come, and Baron de Fancamp had found no suitable statue. Two friends of his, Denis le Prêtre and Louis, his brother, came to his relief in this perplexity. They wished to contribute towards spreading devotion to Our Lady in Canada, especially in her town of Ville-Marie, and therefore placed in de Fancamp's hands a little image of the Blessed Virgin, which he

in turn gave to Sister Bourgeoys. It was made of wood taken from the old oak tree in which a shepherd had discovered the miraculous statue of Notre Dame de Montaigu, in Belgium. Pierre Chevrier joyfully received the timely gift and his joy was deepened into gratitude by his sudden recovery from a serious illness after praying for relief before it. When Margaret returned for the promised offering, he gave her not the statue only, but also a beautiful niche of gilded wood and a sum of money for the Ville-Marie chapel. With deep veneration Margaret received the lovely statue, a little gem of some eight inches in height exquisitely carved out of dark brown wood.

Bearing her treasure, and accompanied by eleven young girls, of whom six were to be her co-laborers, she left Paris, returning this time by way of Normandy, the first home of the early colonists who peopled the broad Canadian lands across the sea. A boat brought the twelve down the historic Seine to a dingy old town with narrow streets and projecting gables, lying at the foot of picturesque hills that closed around it on three sides. It seems a stray bit of the Middle Ages, and as such, Rouen, the birthplace of Corneille, the scene of Jeanne d'Arc's cruel death, is loved by travellers and antiquarians. When Margaret threaded its dim old streets and prayed in its grand Gothic churches, Corneille was an old man of sixty-six, whose sun had set, whose glory had waned

and whose lonely poverty-stricken old age was beginning with the publication of his last feeble tragedies.

Margaret and her followers were obliged to spend a whole month in Rouen, waiting for news of their ship's departure. Apart from its churches, there was little there to interest those whose minds were more occupied with things of heaven than with those of earth, so the thirty days seemed very long and dull. Besides, the prolonged stay in a strange place without any friends to help them was a serious drain on their slender resources. One day, Madeliene Sénécal, who was the bursar, said to Sister Bourgeoys: "Sister, we have just enough money for this week, and no more. What shall we do afterwards?" "You distrust Providence," the latter replied rather coldly, "has It ever failed us in our time of need?" "Meanwhile," returned Madeliene, laughingly, "we must dine." "Enough my daughter," Margaret said to her, "God will provide." She was right. Before the end of the week came Louis Frin, de Maisonneuve's trusted servant, bringing for each of the band an order for 200 livres, and also a daily pension to be paid regularly until their arrival in Quebec. This opportune relief was due, it is supposed, to Colbert's generosity.

There was no more anxiety about lack of funds but the monotony of waiting wearied the young girls. The ship was to sail from Havre de Grâce, a busy seaport of Normandy, fifty-four miles from Rouen.



For some time it had borne the name of its founder, Francis I., being known as Franciscopolis; but the nearness of an ancient chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Grace caused its later title, "Havre de Grâce," to supersede the former. In our own day, Le Havre is a well built, airy town, the fourth or fifth of France in commercial importance, with a yearly average of sixteen thousand vessels moving at its perfectly equipped docks. Thither Margaret led her charges, hoping the change of scene would relieve the tedium of the long delay. Reaching Havre, after a short trip by water, they saw their ship load amid the bustle and confusion incident to the preparation of an ocean voyage. At first the sight was a novel and interesting one, but, after a fortnight in the small sea-port, all interest was lost, and the pious travellers found a welcome relief in prayer.

Margaret tells us that "in the two journeys made to bring out young girls, whenever there happened to be places of devotion on our route, we always renewed there our resolution of seeking perfection." One of these existed not far from Havre de Grâce, and Margaret suggested to her sisters that they make a pilgrimage there to obtain a speedy departure and a safe journey. They gladly agreed, and a day was chosen for the pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame des Neiges, to whom, as we already know, Margaret had a special devotion. Although the distance was no trifling one, the Sisters determined to walk the

six miles without breaking their fast, in order to receive Holy Communion at the shrine. In the early morning the travellers set out, with the song of birds and the glorious music of the in-coming waves filling their ears, and the fresh beauty of dew-bathed scenery and swelling ocean before their eyes. The sun was already high overhead when they reached the chapel of Notre Dame des Neiges, and of the two priests who lived nearby, one had said his Mass several hours earlier, and the other was ill in bed. But when Sister Bourgeoys told of their desire for Mass and Communion, the former was moved to compassion and trusting to Our Lady's power went to seek his friend. The latter determined to make a great effort. Rising with difficulty, he managed to dress and go down to the chapel. When he began the Mass, his strength returned in a wonderful manner, and he was able to say it to the end and give all the pilgrims Holy Communion."\*

A few days later, on the 2d of July, 1672, everything being ready at last, the ship weighed anchor and set sail. To Margaret's joy, there was a priest on board, Father Lefèbre, who was going to the Montreal Seminary. The passengers numbered forty-five, forming a ship's company which resembled a community of which Sister Bourgeoys might be called the Superior. Several times a day, when Margaret or her companions recited prayers, men and women,

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\* *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, 1818, p. 109.

sailors and passengers, met before the graceful oratory in which had been placed the priceless statue of Notre Dame de Bonsecours.

Margaret's greatest wish was to reach Quebec on the feast of the Assumption, that she might bear to land on that day the cherished statue; thus Mary herself would in a special manner, take possession of a country already consecrated to her. To this end, she had urged her daughters to make a novena and to promise, should they reach Canada on the 15th of August, to hear three Masses on that day and on the three succeeding ones. Their prayers were heard. Not only was the crossing calm and prosperous, but it was also one of the shortest that had yet been made from France to Canada. For, having left Havre de Grâce on the Feast of the Visitation, they landed at Quebec on the eve of the Assumption, forty-three days later.

## CHAPTER XIII.

EVIL TIDINGS — A JOYOUS WELCOME — POVERTY  
INDEED — A GLANCE AT CANADIAN HISTORY —  
THE ANNUAL FAIR.

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ON leaving the ship Sister Bourgeoys was eagerly welcomed by friends and acquaintances.

Among them was one of those melancholy souls who find a peculiar pleasure in giving bad news and watching its effect on the poor victim. With great apparent reluctance, this officious news-monger, coming up to Sister Bourgeoys, informed her that the Montreal Community was in a state of decadence and its very existence in imminent danger. Not a quiver passed over the nun's serene face and there was no tremor in her quiet voice as she replied, "Blessed be God! He Who allows it to fall can raise it up once more whenever He sees fit."

Having heard these tidings, Margaret longed the more to enter her convent again and comfort her daughters by sharing their trials. A few days after the ship's arrival, the novices with their Superior took their places in the small craft which carried passengers from Quebec to Montreal.

If there had been joy in Quebec because of her return, much greater was the rejoicing of the Ville-Marie population when its beloved adviser, teacher and mother, came to resume her labors. All were eager to look upon her kind face again, to hear her gentle words of sympathy, to press the hands that had so fondly tended the sick and so steadily worked for the poor. Mary's loving subjects of Ville-Marie always celebrated her feasts with great joy, and this glorious solemnity of her Assumption seemed all the happier because Sister Bourgeoys had come in time to keep it with them.

Dollier de Casson, a soldier-priest and historian, writes: "What I consider truly worthy of admiration is that this good Sister Bourgeoys should have made as she has just done, a journey of two years' duration to France, during which without friends or money, she has subsisted, obtained her commission from the Court and returned with twelve or thirteen girls, of whom but few had wherewith to pay their passage. All this is admirable, and shows the hand of God on this holy nun and on her Institute."\*

Touching was the meeting between Sister Bourgeoys and her daughters! They waited at the threshold to greet her, and fell on their knees at her feet, but she tenderly raised them up and pressed them, one by one, to her motherly heart. Then, turning to the six novices, she welcomed them joyously to

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\* *Histoire de Montréal.*

their new home. She did not rest until she had revisited the convent from cellar to garret, speaking to each of the little pupils who smiled a welcome up into her responsive face, and resuming the burden of her duties just as though it had not been laid aside for four and twenty months. Order, cleanliness, industry, she found everywhere as she had left them,—but another guest had entered, one whom she saw with joy and received into her heart as the sweetest friend; and this was none other than the “Lady Poverty” so dear to the Saint of Assisi. Poor as the convent had been when she left, it was far poorer now. What might then have been called simplicity, was now little more than abject poverty. So much so that, when the bell summoned the Community to the midday meal, the scanty fare consisted of dry bread and a morsel of salt meat scarcely less dry. To Margaret, this seemed the most delicious meal she had ever tasted, for poverty had prepared it and flavored it, and poverty she loved as the blessing and safeguard of religious life.

When Sister Bourgeoys bade Geneviève Durosoy go to prepare supper for the Community, the novice objected, saying: “What do you wish me to prepare, Mother? I see nothing in the larder.” “Why do you distrust Providence?” the saintly Foundress returned, “go nevertheless to your post, and God will provide.” Once more this heroic confidence was fully justified. In the afternoon, a large number

of citizens came to see Sister Bourgeoys and welcome the novices from their Mother Country. Before the supper-bell had rung, their gifts had replenished the empty larder. He who cares for the birdling in its nest did not forget the faithful servants whom voluntary poverty had left in utter dependence upon His aid.

It were perhaps well to leave Margaret Bourgeoys and her daughters to the joy of reunion and to the labors now pursued with more vigor than ever before while we cast a cursory glance over the most striking events of Canadian History since her departure for Europe in 1670 down to 1676. In August of the former year, M. Talon, the zealous and efficient Intendant, returned from a visit to France, bringing with him many settlers, five Recollet brothers and the new Governor of Ville-Marie, M. Perrot. The latter carried letters-royal granted in the name of Father de Bretonvilliers, then Superior of Saint Sulpice. An important event in the history of the Church in Canada was the holy death of Mother Mary of the Incarnation, foundress of the Quebec Ursulines, often surnamed "the Canadian St. Teresa." Her unwearied labors only ceased when her ardent soul went to its reward in 1672. In a preceding chapter, we noted that Margaret Bourgeoys had, on arrival in Canada, been very friendly with the Ursulines who had even urged her to join their Community.

Venerable Mother of the Incarnation was therefore well known to her.

Towards the close of the same year, 1672, one of Canada's greatest governors came out to represent Louis XIV. in New France. "Frontenac," writes Father Charlevoix, "was gifted with a quick, inventive, firm and polished mind. He was inclined to the most unjust prejudices and capable of carrying them to great lengths. His talents were equalled by his personal bravery." Unfortunately for Montreal, the passionate Governor embroiled himself with the new authorities in that Island, thus troubling the peace of the little Community. Soon, however, Frontenac was recalled, and concord reigned once more.

In 1673, Margaret lost a true friend by the death of Jeanne Mance, foundress of the Hotel-Dieu.

In 1674, Quebec was raised to the rank of a bishopric. Two years later, M. de Maisonneuve, the noble Christian soldier to whom Montreal owes its existence and preservation, died in Paris, at peace with God and man.

A glance at the civil condition of Canada would show it to be still far from peaceful. The Iroquois were ever to be feared and their evil doings formed the theme of many a terrified settler's piteous tale. The population had rapidly increased; forts had risen up or been strengthened; the king's paternal interest in his greatest colony had resulted in increase



of trade, commerce and prosperity. An interesting custom of the period is thus described by an American historian: "To induce the Indians to come to the colonists, in order that the fur trade might be controlled by the government, a great annual fair was established, by the order of king, at Montreal. Thither every summer a host of savages came down from the lakes in their bark canoes. A place was assigned them at a little distance from the town. They landed, drew up their canoes in a line up the bank; took out their packs of beaver-skins, set up their wigwams, slung their kettles, and encamped for the night. On the next day there was a grand council on the common, between St. Paul Street and the river. Speeches were made amid a solemn smoking of pipes. The Governor was usually present, seated in an armchair, while the visitors formed a ring around him, ranged in the order of their tribe. On the next day the trade began in the same place. Merchants of high and low degree brought up their goods from Quebec, and every inhabitant of Montreal of any substance, sought a share in the profit. Their booths were set up along the palisades of the town, and each had an interpreter to whom he usually promised a certain portion of his gains. The scene abounded in those contrasts which mark the whole course of French Canadian history. Here was a throng of Indians armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, or the cheap guns of the trade, some of them

completely naked, except for the feathers on their heads and the paint on their faces; French bush-rangers tricked out with savage finery; merchants and *habitants* in their coarse and plain attire and the grave priests of St. Sulpice robed in black." \*

Of Montreal itself this description is given by the same graphic writer when treating of the years 1665-1672: "As you approached Montreal, the fortified mill, built by the Sulpicians at Pointe-aux-Trembles, towered above the woods; and soon after, the newly-built chapel of the Infant Jesus. More settlements followed, till at length the great fortified mill in Montreal rose in sight; then the long row of compact wooden houses, the Hotel-Dieu, and the rough masonry of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice." † — The Sulpicians, feudal owners of Montreal,—surrounded the island with a border of fiefs, large and small, granted partly to officers and partly to humble settlers, bold, hardy and practiced in woodcraft. Thus, a line of sentinels was posted around the entire shore, ready to give the alarm whenever an enemy appeared." It is interesting to note how almost ludicrously small were the payments (known as *cens et rente*) made by these tenants to their priestly landlords. "A common charge at Montreal was half a sou and half a pint of wheat for each arpent." \*\*

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\* Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 353.

† Ibid, p. 290.

\*\* Arpent: An old French measure of about an acre.

The rate usually fluctuated in the early time between half a sou and two sous — Later in the history of the colony grants were at a somewhat higher rate." \* And no wonder.

So much for the outward aspect. Writing at the same period Père Charlevoix has this to say of the moral aspect: "The Island of Montreal resembled a religious community, because from the beginning none but people of exemplary conduct were allowed to settle there. Moreover, they were continually exposed to the predatory inroads of the Iroquois, and like the Israelites on their return from the Babylonian captivity, they were obliged, while building their rude structures and clearing their lands, almost constantly to have their tools in one hand and their weapons in the other, to defend themselves against an enemy that waged war only by surprise." †

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\* Parkman, *The Old Régime in Canada*, p. 49

† Charlevoix, *Histoire du Canada*.

## CHAPTER XIV.

NOTRE DAME DE BONSECOURS — THE TASK RESUMED — PRELIMINARIES — HOW THE FIRST CHURCH WAS BUILT — A RENEWAL OF FERVOR — A BACKWARD GLANCE.

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WE have not forgotten Sister Bourgeoys' desire to build a chapel in Our Lady's honor, nor the precious statue she had brought out from France for the yet unbuilt church.

The statue had been placed in the rude structure erected before her departure, and its presence there drew a larger and more fervent crowd of worshippers to what was already a favored shrine. In the beginning of June, 1673, Margaret Bourgeoys had borne it in her own hands to the little shrine of Notre Dame de Bonsecours, where it remained until the new church was completed. It had been removed from the private oratory of the *Congrégation de Notre Dame* at Father Perrot's request, on the plea that more of his parishioners would be enabled to pray before it in the public chapel.

The remembrance of Our Lady's wondrous favors dwelt ever in Mother Bourgeoys' heart, feeding there

a burning desire to make some return to this Heavenly Benefactress by spreading and strengthening Mary's worship in the New World. We have seen the partial realization of this design, a chapel begun, the work interrupted and finally laid aside for a time in obedience to Father de Queylus' wishes. But now, at last, it was near its accomplishment. The citizens of Ville-Marie were all eager to see the long-projected chapel whose erection had been decided upon by the Montreal Company, and foretold by Father Olier, \* but they could offer Margaret no aid because their resources were already severely taxed by the building of a large parish church.

The priests of Saint Sulpice to whom Margaret had confided the execution of this project, obtained the necessary permission from the episcopal authorities. In the month of August, Father Perrot, or perhaps Dollier de Casson, wrote to M. Dudouyt, the Vicar-General, begging permission to build. On the 24th of the same month this answer was received: "I am most happy to see that you promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin so zealously. I approve the project of building a little chapel near the town of Montreal where the Blessed Virgin may be honored. According to Pere Pijart's verbal explanation, the site chosen is very near the town; if it were a little further, this would contribute to the devotion of the people who would there make their pilgrimages. You will

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\* *Histoire de Bonsecours* par l'Abbé J. M. Leleu, p. 22.

kindly consider this, and let me know your opinion."

The distance from the town to the shrine was indeed trifling; perhaps a quarter of a mile separated it from St. Jean Baptiste Street where stood the last houses of the settlement. However, the site chosen was protected by St. Mary's Fort, and besides, the task of keeping the road in passable condition, after the winter snowstorms especially, would have proved too difficult had the church been placed further out in the open country. Already the colonists were in the habit of going there regularly; it was easy of access to the priests who said Mass and to the nuns, who cared for the altar; for all these reasons it was decided to retain the original site.\*

The Assumption was chosen by Margaret Bourgeoys as the titular feast of the new chapel. As the greatest day of a saint's life is that on which death breaks his chain, allowing him to "enter into the joy of his Lord," so it is the most glorious feast of her whose years of exile on earth, after the Ascension, were a long martyrdom, a slow pining away of the Immaculate Heart so inseparably united to the Heart of Jesus. This feast, the one about which she most loved to speak to her daughters, was in Margaret's eyes the greatest and clearest manifestation of Our Lady's power and glory; hence she chose it in preference to all others. This choice was ratified

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\* For these and subsequent details see *Histoire de N. D. de Bonsecours à Montreal* par l'Abbé Leleu, pp. 10-24

on the 4th of November, 1674, by M. Hestry de Bernières, Vicar-General of Quebec, during the bishop's protracted absence.

The following year a part of the necessary funds was at hand. M. de Fancamp's gift of 300 livres, being profitably invested, had doubled its value; other gifts have been made until more than 2,000 livres were in Sister Bourgeoys' hands. Besides, the nuns themselves had worked and saved and stinted enough to contribute 100 louis, and Father Souart gave the land upon which the chapel was to be erected. On June 29, 1675, feast of the two great princes of the church, Peter and Paul, immediately after solemn vespers, a procession of the clergy passed out of the town and paused on the chosen spot. A cross was set up where the altar would one day stand, and then clergy and people retraced their steps. The following day, the entire population of Ville-Marie gathered outside the town to witness the solemn laying of the corner-stone. The one which had been there since 1657, was now removed and a larger one, laid in the name of Pierre Chevrier, Baron de Fancamp, took its place. Under it were deposited a medal of the Blessed Virgin and a leaden tablet bearing the inscription:

D. O. M.

Beatae. Mariæ. Virgini.

Sub. Titulo. Assumptionis.

The priests of the Seminary, the church wardens and four Congregation nuns, Margaret Bourgeoys, Anne Hioux, Elizabeth de la Bertache, and Margaret Prudhomme, signed the legal report of the memorable ceremony.

No sooner was the first stone laid than the work of building began. Sister Bourgeoys' zeal kindled the hearts of those around her; with unwearied energy the builders toiled, aided by the colonists and by the nuns themselves. It seemed like a picture from the Ages of Faith to see a whole town intent upon the erection of a church and all its inhabitants eager to lend their aid. The teachers were happy, even after a long day spent among restless children in a crowded class, to offer their assistance to the laborers. Sister Bourgeoys' spirit seemed to have passed into their hearts and to have given unwonted strength to their hands. She tells us how they helped the workmen and how one among them was rewarded for this labor of love: "Sister Soumillard suffered from a most painful abscess in the head, which prevented her stooping; she was obliged to kneel in order to sweep her room. Heedless of her infirmity, however, on one occasion, she served the masons during two or three hours. From that time and for an entire year she felt not the slightest pain in her head. Nor was this the only cure which manifested the power of Mary in this favored shrine. We might here quote what Louis Veuillot says in his *Pèlerinages en*



*Suisse*: "Ah! sweet Mother of Christians, Queen of Angels and of all that is holy in Heaven, will our curiosity ask of thee why it has pleased thee to open in one place more than another the inexhaustible treasure of thy benefits? No, thou lovest us to implore thee. Thou provest it by a thousand graces poured forth upon all our sufferings; that we should know this, is enough."

Prayer and toil wrought wonders; a church of solid stone rose where the poor shed had been. Soon, though the young colony could not afford a giant bell, it received one whose value was doubled by the associations connected with it. "The metal of this bell, which weighed a little under one hundred pounds, was that of a broken canon which I had obtained from M. de Maisonneuve; Father Souart paid for the casting." So writes Sister Bourgeoys. Truly it was meet that the bell of a church destined to be the colony's safeguard against both spiritual and temporal foes, should be made of a cannon once used in Iroquois warfare — yet more meet that the memory of Ville-Marie's gallant Founder should be thus recalled each time it woke the echoes of the surrounding forest!

The long desired fane stood at last without Ville-Marie. Its cross in air, its bell swinging in the turret, its miraculous statue looking down with maternal grace and tenderness upon the kneeling pilgrims.

No sooner was it completed than the Congrégation de Notre Dame gave to the parish the sum set aside for its erection; this gift was accompanied by one stipulation, that the chapel should always be attached to the Notre Dame parish. Soon after Sister Bourgeoys, in her own name and in that of her companions, addressed a petition to the Bishop of Quebec asking him to sanction this connection, "that the oratory may never, on any account, be separated from the parish, nor occupied nor possessed by any others, but the priests of the Seminary. In this wise the designs of the benefactors will be executed together with those of the sisters of the Congregation."

The latter asked another favor of the Bishop; that they might continue to care for the chapel and to receive the alms given to complete the interior. "They offer to do this," said they, "to render to the Blessed Virgin, their Mother, all the honor and service of which they are capable." Mgr. de Laval granted these requests in a pastoral dated Nov. 6, 1678, but this date lies beyond the limits of the present chapter.

Thus was begun, continued and completed through Margaret Bourgeoys' patient waiting and earnest endeavors, this church, dedicated to our Lady, and the first stone church built on the Island of Montreal. It immediately attracted crowds of pilgrims, and its presence renewed the faith and fervor of a whole population.

An eye witness writes of it: "Mass is said there every day, and even several times a day, to satisfy the people's great devotion to Our Lady of Good Help. People go there in procession in times of public need and calamity, and these pilgrimages are productive of blessed results. Each evening, the pious people wend their way thither, few are the good Catholics from all parts of Canada who do not make promises and offerings to this chapel in their dangers or necessities. I mention these facts to show that the birth of this devotion is due to the zeal of Sister Bourgeoys for the honor of the Mother of God. Unable by herself to accomplish these results, success ever attended her undertakings, she is able to achieve every work by which God may be glorified; spiritual and temporal affairs always prosper in her hands, because it is the love of our Lord that inspires and enlightens her."\*

The quaint old church of Bonsecours, so dear to all Montrealers, stands in a now rather dingy part of the town. The building stood on the top of the river's bank, a little below the ridge on which Notre Dame Street now stretches its narrow length. From the door could be seen the great river, flowing by in its majestic calm, and directly opposite, the thick, verdant foliage that marks St. Helen's Island.

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\*Sœur Morin, *Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu St. Joseph.*

As the years go by we shall see how often Our Lady of Good Help showed the power of her intercession and verified to the full, her gracious title during some of the most troublous hours of Ville-Marie's existence.

## CHAPTER XV.

AFTER TWENTY YEARS — THE PRAYER OF FAITH —  
THE SHIPS DELAYED — OTHER MARVELS —  
A BEAUTIFUL LIFE.

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**T**WENTY-THREE years have gone by since Margaret Bourgeoys set her steadfast feet on the rude path to which a divine vocation had long been calling her. Her Community has been founded, her school opened, her influence recognized in Ville-Marie and its environs; twice she has revisited her native land and brought back helpers for her work. Already, some of her pupils have grown up, and, as wives and mothers, are instilling into other hearts the noble lessons taught them by one who is, even now, their refuge in every trouble and perplexity.

Almost a quarter of a century has elapsed since the Congrégation de Notre Dame began, in lowliness and poverty, an existence that is still humble and poor. We said, in a preceding chapter, that the little Community prospered, that new houses were opened and many useful foundations kept up;—yet, even now, there are times when the prayer, “Give us

this day our daily bread," has to be offered up with an urgency born of a need unknown to our easy lives.

Margaret Bourgeoys came back from France to a very poor home, and we know how scanty was her first meal after her arrival. More than once afterwards, the same dreary perspective of privation and want stared her in the face, and, each time, her strong faith sprang up to meet the emergency and won from Heaven the needed help. Once (in a year of scarcity amounting to famine) there was hardly any flour in the convent. The sister whose duty it was to bake and cook for the Community, was looking with despondent face and attitude at the small measure that would have to furnish bread for the household. At last, she turned away, saying: "What is the use of trying? I can not make enough bread with so little flour." But Sister Bourgeoys, who chanced to enter the room, said gently: "Come, Sister, trust in our Father's goodness. Begin kneading this flour, and He will bless your effort." There was that in the Superior's face and voice which changed the nun's discouragement to confidence. She set to work, and to her astonishment, made as much bread with the one little measure as she usually did with five.

Another time the convent was dependent for the supplies on the provisions to be brought in by the hourly expected ships. An adverse wind was blowing

so strongly as to keep back any vessel that might attempt to reach the shore. Weather prophets held out no hope of a change of wind before one whole day or even longer. Hours passed, and still the wind blew steadily away from the land. Four o'clock came, and there seemed no hope of getting flour in time for supper. Sister Bourgeois divining, with ready sympathy, how worried and anxious was the Sister in charge of the baking, sent one of the other nuns to comfort her and bid her seek Our Lady's aid,—and if the Mother prayed, would not the Son do again what had drawn from the timid disciples the wondering cry: "Who is this, that both wind and sea obey Him?" Relieved and encouraged, the docile Sister fell on her knees, and breathed a fervent prayer to the Mother of God. No sooner had the petition, impelled by the might of simple faith, winged its way straight to Mary's heart, than the wind wavered and the surface of the river was tormented by opposing forces. A moment more, and puffs of cool air blew in the faces of the watchers at the water's edge. Soon the ships came into view, flying before the favorable breeze. Nearer they came and nearer, until at last they anchored within the harbor. So swiftly did they come and so promptly were they unloaded that the convent's store of flour arrived in good time for the waiting Sister to prepare the evening meal.

For a long time (whether before or after these incidents is not noted by Mother Bourgeoys' historian) the nuns daily witnessed another marvel. Whatever amount of grain was stored up in the granary, it ever seemed to increase as it was taken out. How could it be that more grain was withdrawn than had been gathered in? When this question was whispered by one Sister to another, the only answer was: "Our Mother often goes there to pray in secret." And the reply sufficed; for what has not been promised to the prayer of faith? "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed," said our Lord Himself, "you shall say to this mountain; remove from hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you." (Matt. XVII. 19.)

However, the nuns one day conceived a great desire to find out just how many measures were added to their supply of grain by the Superior's prayers. For this purpose, they planned to weigh the quantity that was put in, and then weigh it again when it was taken out. Hearing of their project, Margaret gently checked them, saying: "This curiosity might displease Our Heavenly Father, and serve only to put an end to His favors in our behalf."

The author of the "*Eloge Historique de la Sœur Marguerite Bourgeoys*", relates that one year, wheat being excessively dear in Montreal, the Sister Burser had purchased one month's supply only, yet it lasted four times that length of time. The good religious



attributed this wonder to Sister Bourgeoys' holiness, and strengthened her assertion by declaring that Margaret went daily to pray beside the little heap of precious grain.

The same winter, says Father Ransonnet, one of her biographers, from whom we borrow several other incidents proving not only Margaret Bourgeoys' strong and childlike faith, but also the fatherly solicitude with which God cared for the Community, a barrel of wine out of which so much had been drawn that it could easily be tilted, supplied not only the needs of the Community, but likewise those of the Hospital, and this during three months. This marvel was attributed to a blessing invoked by Sister Bourgeoys upon the sole remaining cask of the (in those days) indispensable wine. As if to prove that God gave miraculous assistance only when human aid was not forthcoming, the cask ceased to flow as soon as ships came in with fresh supplies of wine for the settlement.

"A trustworthy person," adds the same author, and one who dwelt with the Sisters of the Congregation from the foundation of the order, testified to having seen a like prodigy: "One year, when wine failed through the country, the Congregation supplied therewith the Seminary for Mass and the Hospital for the sick. The same person informed us that one day there being no bread for dinner, Sister Bourgeoys, through fidelity to rule, caused the bell for

Particular Examen to be rung at the usual hour, and that, during this exercise, which takes place immediately before dinner, some one came to the house and brought to the nuns the bread of which they stood in need.”\*

We might cull many more examples of this kind from biographies of our heroine, but these will suffice. The power of her prayers, as manifested by such striking incidents naturally suggests the query: “What was it that made these prayers so pleasing to God? What but the holiness and beauty of her soul and of her life?” Let us see what writers tell us of her virtues, and then we shall wonder less at graces obtained through her petitions.

“Let me,” writes M. Sausseret, “Let me say a few words of her private virtues, which far more than words, gave her power over the souls she led to holiness. Always bearing in her body, like the Apostle, the mortification of Jesus Christ, she partook only of the coarsest food, ate very little, drank only water, and that but once a day and in very small quantities. She slept on the floor or on the earth, with a block of wood for her pillow. In winter she never drew near the fire. Her prayer was so continual, that one of her directors called her “the little Saint Genevieve of Canada.” . . . “The mere sight of her inspired humility,” say the Annals of the Hotel-Dieu. “We

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\* *Eloge Historique de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, l'Abbé Sausseret .

have known her," says the author of the work entitled *Premier Etablissement de la Foi dans la Nouvelle France*, "we have known her full of the spirit of God, of wisdom, of experience, with an invincible constancy in presence of all the obstacles that impeded her purpose." "I do not believe," says Rev. Father Bouvard, Superior to the Jesuits in Quebec, "that I ever saw a woman as virtuous as Sister Bourgeoys, so much have I remarked in her of magnanimity, faith, confidence in God, devotion, zeal, humility, and mortification."

Perhaps mortification is, after charity, the most striking of her virtues. The recital of her penances makes us shrink in dismay; yet, if we be too cowardly, to imitate what the Saints have done, can we not, at least, summon up enough courage to look upon and admire that which is so far above our poor attainments? From John the Baptist to Aloysius Gonzaga, and from Francis of Assissi to Rose of Lima, all God's greatest saints, far from being content with resignation to inevitable sufferings, have loved pain and sought after it for love of Jesus Crucified. Margaret was, like them, ingenious in devising methods of mortifying her senses. She allowed herself little time for sleep and always devoted two hours to meditation, remaining the while in most uncomfortable positions. The discipline often lacerated a body already worn by fatigue and hardship, and a cap lined with pin points wounded her weary head

night and day. Her daughters, having discovered these practices, implored her to temper her austerities that she might be the longer spared to her Community. She responded by an instruction on the duty of Christian mortification. Her words were at once so forcible and so touching that instead of continuing their futile pleading, the religious were inspired with an ardent desire to walk in their saintly mother's footsteps.

## CHAPTER XVI.

MGR. DE LAVAL VISITS VILLE-MARIE — EPISCOPAL APPROBATION — SOMETHING LACKING — MARGARET RESOLVES TO MAKE A THIRD VISIT TO FRANCE — THE FIRST SUPERIOR OF OUR LADY'S CONGREGATION — IN QUEBEC — THE CROSSING — MARGARET'S NARRATIVE — A DISAPPOINTMENT — THE RULE OUTLINED — THE RETURN — A — THRILLING MOMENT — SAVED!—QUEBEC AGAIN.

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WHEN two years of probation had gone by Margaret thought her novices sufficiently prepared for admission into the Community. She wrote to the Vicar-General at Quebec, asking if it were better to admit them without further delay or to await the Bishop's return. "You are free to do either," answered Mr. Bernières, "but it were more proper to delay until His Lordship's arrival. As he has written to me about you and your Community, for which he manifests great affection, it were well that he should personally arrange everything and make known his own intentions. I trust all will

succeed for the glory of God, the good of souls and your own consolation. I, on my part, shall contribute to this success as far as in me lies."

Months went by with their daily round of labors, trials and consolations, and at last Mgr. de Laval returned to his diocese. Shortly after, in June, 1676, he went up to Ville-Marie. His first visits were to the different foundations of the Congrégation de Notre Dame. Before leaving, he presided at an impressive ceremony; the postulants who had already proved their worthiness by years of fidelity, knelt at the Pastor's feet, and asked admittance into the Community. He received their promises, and, after a few words of fatherly counsel and encouragement, blessed them with a special and solemn benediction.

Then, the Foundress herself came to crave a boon. She begged the Bishop to confirm her Institute by an authentic act and to approve the rules already observed by its members.

Soon after reaching Quebec, Mgr. de Laval addressed to the faithful of his diocese a pastoral letter recalling that the Congrégation de Notre Dame had been approved by him in 1669 and later confirmed by royal letters. He concluded thus: "Knowing that one of the greatest benefits we can confer on the church in Canada and the most efficacious means of increasing piety in Christian families, is the instruction and sound education of children; knowing, moreover, the aid Our Lord has given, up to the present,

to Sister Bourgeoys and her companions for the direction of schools in which we have seen them at work; and wishing to favor their zeal and to contribute with all our strength to the execution of their pious project: We have approved the Institute founded by Sister Bourgeoys and by the young girls who have joined her, or who will do so in the future; allowing them to live in Community as secular members of the *Congrégation de Notre Dame*, observing the rules which we shall prescribe later; and to continue discharging the functions of school teachers, as well in the Island of Montreal as in the other places to which we and our successors may think fit to send them."

Henceforth, approved and confirmed both by ecclesiastical and civil authority, the Community's existence was assured and it began to assume a more regular form.

Historians date from this epoch the adoption of the religious habit now so familiar in all parts of Canada and the United States. The costume chosen by Margaret Bourgeoys on account of its simplicity and usefulness, has but slightly varied since the time when our saintly heroine wore it and made it a welcome sight to all in poverty, sickness or sorrow.

As to the rules of the Institute, time and deliberation were necessary before they could be examined and approved. This approbation was therefore postponed until some later period. None knew how

long the delay was to be, a delay which may be attributed to Mgr. de Laval's departure for Europe and his prolonged stay in his native land.

With her eyes ever on the future and her heart full of solicitude for her companions and for the souls they were destined to guide, Margaret earnestly desired to see her rule definitely drawn up and confirmed. Until this was accomplished, much would be lacking in the Community's formation, and its future stability and usefulness would be greatly endangered. She who had given it life could not think without anxiety of its possible fate, should it be prematurely deprived of her guidance. To hasten the fulfilment of her desires, she resolved to abridge the tedious delay by going to Mgr. de Laval instead of waiting for his return to Canada.

Apart from this powerful motive, others also impelled her to undertake the long journey with its double crossing of the stormy ocean. Her sensitive conscience was troubled and perplexed; she longed for guidance to strengthen and comfort her; this she thought could be best found in Paris, where lived so many holy and enlightened priests. There also could be consulted founders and members of orders similar to her own, and such advice would prove invaluable in the hard task of compiling rules for her Community.

With this three-fold object in view, Sister Bourgeoys began the necessary preparations for her journey. Her first care was to secure the welfare of the



Community. Advice and encouragement she gave with wise foresight and maternal tenderness — but this was not all. So deep was her humility that she considered herself incapable of leading her daughters in the path of perfection, and like many of the saints whose lives we read, could not bear to hold an office of which she deemed herself unworthy.

The nuns being gathered together in expectant silence, Margaret solemnly resigned her authority as Superior and proposed that another and a worthier be elected in her stead. There was one moment's hush of surprise, then, moved by a common impulse, all fell upon their knees and with one voice, cried out: "We choose the Mother of God to be our first Superior, our teacher, our foundress, our Mother for time and for eternity!" Then, rising up, they turned to Margaret, who with tear-dimmed eyes had witnessed this touching tribute to her beloved Patroness, and begged her to rule them as Our Lady's representative and under Our Lady's protection. So urgent an appeal could not be rejected. Margaret knelt before the Blessed Virgin's statue, and, as the other nuns followed her example, she fervently recited the following prayer:

"O most holy Virgin, behold the little band consecrated to God's service under thy care. Its members hope to imitate thee as dutiful children follow in the footsteps of their mother and their mistress; they look upon thee as their beloved teacher and their

first Superior, trusting that God will ratify their election and give thee this little Community, truly thy work, to be thy special domain. We have nothing worthy of being offered to God; but we hope to obtain, through thee, the graces necessary for our salvation and for the perfection of our state. Thou knowest our needs and what we should ask of thee far better than we do ourselves; refuse not thine assistance. Help us by thy powerful intercession to obtain the light and grace of the Holy Ghost that we may be fitted to educate the pupils committed to our care. Above all, we ask of thee, O, Our Lady and Mother, that all the maidens who enter this Community as well as all who contribute to their spiritual advancement, may be numbered among the elect, that we may, together with thee, praise our God in the ever-blessed eternity. Amen."

From that hour Our Dear Lady herself became the true Superior of the Community—"Regina Congregationis," as her daughters lovingly named her.

For this reason and in virtue of this election, Sister Bourgeoys no longer considered herself precisely a Superior, but rather as owing submission to the Blessed Virgin and acting under the guidance of her who presides over the government of the *Congrégation de Notre Dame*.

Leaving her daughters safe in Mary's keeping, Margaret said the last loving farewell and, escorted

by the crowd of her friends and protégées, passed down the narrow street to the wharf.

A few days after her arrival in Quebec, Margaret received from Father Rémy, Superior of the Congregation, a set of rules recently drawn up and for which he wished her to obtain the Bishop's approbation. We have her acknowledgment, simple and sincere as her writings ever are: "Rev. Sir and very dear Father,—I have received the package containing the letters, rules, etc. I thank God for the excellent care the Bishop takes of our little Community, and I thank Him also because He enlightens all concerned in the writing of our rule; for, being led in this manner, I have no doubt but that all is in accordance with the Holy Will of God and that the Blessed Virgin grants us her assistance on this occasion as ever before."

Several weeks elapsed. The gloom of November had overspread the sky, turned the blue river to a dull brown and imparted to the misty air a penetrating chill, when the out-going ship moved away from Quebec, bearing our heroine for the third and last time back to her native land. She was not travelling alone; what she had once done for Jeanne Mance she was now doing for Madame Perrot, the wife of the Governor of Montreal. That lady, being advised to return to France for the good of her health, had need of a companion for the journey, so Sister Bourgeoys offered to go with her.

On arriving at La Rochelle after an uneventful crossing, Madame Perrot was obliged to part from Margaret. The latter, after mentioning the manner of her last crossing, says in her *Memoirs*: "However, on reaching La Rochelle, I left Madame Perrot, and that I might get to Paris without expense, I hired a seat in a waggoner's cart." Before leaving, she experienced a most blessed relief from the spiritual troubles which had oppressed her soul. "Being at La Rochelle," she tells us, "I spoke of my uneasiness to a Capuchin who soon quieted my mind."

It were well to recall what was said of Margaret's former journey from La Rochelle to Paris; the single place in a primitive conveyance, the solitary and often scanty meals, the nights spent in rude inns, the long hours of tedious driving. Nine years had worked no wonders, while on the contrary, weakened by their added toil and austerity, Margaret was now less fitted to bear so much fatigue, her strength gave way, and, on reaching Madame de Bellevue's house in Paris, she took to her bed and was ill for several days.

We may now resume the narrative in her own simple words: "When Monsieur de Tourm nie, who looked after our affairs, heard of my arrival and of my illness, he sent a sedan chair, with two bearers, to take me to his house, where he had prepared a comfortable room for me. There, during the fortnight and more that my illness lasted, I was

treated as though I were his own sister. Being restored to perfect health, I went to stay with the Daughters of the Cross, Saint Antoine Street.\* A few days later, having heard that he was in Paris, I went to greet Mgr. de Laval, and made known to him the motive of my journey. He told me I had acted unwisely in undertaking it, and that he did not deem it expedient for me to take out young girls to help us in Montreal." What then had she gained by this the most painful and wearisome of her three long journeys? Fatigue, illness, a stern rebuke and a cold refusal of her requests — was it for this she had recrossed the ocean in spite of every hardship? Even had it been only for these, she would have rejoiced; but, she had also gained advantages whose value we are more competent to understand. Her peace of mind had been restored, her delicate conscience set at rest. Then she had conversed with many saintly souls whose advice was of incalculable value not only for her own spiritual advancement, but also for the definite formation of her Community. She visited orders whose aim was similar to her own, examined their rule, viewed the result of their labors, discerned what might be taken from each as best suited the life and mission of the Ville-Marie Community.

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\* This order had been founded by Madame de Villeneuve, under the direction of St. Francis de Sales. Its members taught in country schools and deserved their name by their many trials.

One of her biographers, outlines the rule that gradually shaped itself in our heroine's mind. "She took for a foundation the rule of Saint Augustin, interpreted by maxims and constitutions drawn, for the most part, from the instructions addressed to Christian Virgins by St. Ambrose and other Doctors of the Church; the maxims and counsels of the Gospel, and all that common-sense prescribed as being wisest and most reasonable. She prescribes love of silence and retirement, cordiality with the other religious, assiduity at work and prayer, and the frequent reception of the sacraments; all this under the direction of the pastors of the parishes, with whom they should share the glory and the merit of instructing and edifying the people." Such, long years before, had been Father Gendret's project.

Notwithstanding his apparent severity, Mgr. de Laval took an active interest in Mother Bourgeoys' labors. We are told that she applied for information to the Filles de Sainte Geneviève, founded by Madame de Miramion. The latter agreed to read and if necessary to revise Margaret's rule; but after an interview with Mgr. de Laval, she failed to carry out her promise. However, the Bishop himself saw the Daughters of the Cross and the "Filles de Sainte Geneviève." We gather this from a letter written by Sœur Charly, C. N. D., to Madame de Maintenon in 1710: "Mgr. de Laval, wishing to give us appropriate rules, consulted the Daughters of the Cross

and Madame de Miramion and took from them their principal regulations in order to keep what would best suit us." \*

In Paris, Sister Bourgeoys met Father Tronson, then Superior of Saint Sulpice. He conceived for the lowly and zealous nun a deep, respectful friendship, of which his subsequent letters give a most conclusive proof. Louis Frin, Maisonneuve's devoted companion, freed from his faithful service only by his Master's death, followed Margaret to Montreal. There, out of gratitude to the first Governor of Ville-Marie, he was kindly received by the Congregation Nuns.

Once more, and for the last time, Sister Bourgeoys was called upon to take charge of several young girls whom the Seminary was sending out to the colony. At the time the travellers embarked for Canada, the English had, for the fifth time, taken possession of that country, and war was thus declared between England and France. This added a new element of danger to an already perilous crossing. However,

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\* Mr. Faillon tells us that he did even more. It seems he asked Madame de Miramion to write her opinion of the rules Margaret Bourgeoys had submitted to her. At least, he gathers this from a letter addressed by Mr. Glandelet to Sœur Charly, in which he mentioned a paper containing remarks upon this rule, being Madame de Miramion's reply to Mgr. de Laval's request. (*Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*. Faillon, p. 261. (Note Vol. 1.)

the ship was under Our Lady's special patronage, and She manifested the efficacy of Her protection in a remarkable manner.

Perhaps one-half of the voyage had been accomplished when the Captain descried four English men-of-war flying before the wind at a speed that must soon bring them near enough to open fire upon his own small vessel. The little ship was unarmed, devoid of all natural safeguards, so it is not surprising that he should have cried out in despair: "Sister Bourgeoys, we are lost! Pray, and make your companions pray, that God may deliver us!" The girls themselves were paralyzed by fear, and clung, sobbing and moaning to Margaret's hands and skirts, screaming: "Sister, we shall be captured! Oh! what will become of us?" But Sister Bourgeoys, tranquil and untroubled, answered gayly: "If we are captured, we shall go to England, where we shall find God just as surely as everywhere else!" Her quiet fortitude and smiling face brought sudden shame to the panic-stricken crew, and their ebbing courage quickly returned.

All knelt around the frail form that hid so strong a soul, and prayed fervently to the God of Mercy. As it was Sunday, a priest, who was on his way to Canada, prepared to say Mass, quietly vesting while the enemy's vessels, driven by a favorable wind, drew rapidly nearer. However, within two hours, they had vanished as though by magic, and at the end of



Mass, a Te Deum was joyfully sung to thank God who had delivered the helpless band from a well-armed foe.

The Captain, touched by Sister Bourgeoys' courage and kindness, repeatedly, but always vainly, urged her to take her place at his own table. Wishing to give her some proof of his respect, he daily sent her the daintiest dishes. This attention afforded her an opportunity of giving pleasure to the poorer passengers.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A DIGRESSION — CATHERINE TEGAKWITHA — A WONDERFUL GRACE — A VISIT TO HER UNCLE'S LODGE — THE YOUNG NEOPHYTE — BAPTISM — FLIGHT — LIFE AT CAUGHNAWAGA — A TRIP TO VILLE-MARIE — THE FIRST INDIAN VIRGIN — A LINGERING DEATH — THE CROWN IS WON.

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**B**EFORE taking up the tale of a work that absorbed much of Mother Bourgeoys' time and attention about this date — 1676-1677—we might pause to study a beautiful life that was drawing to its gentle close near Montreal at that very period. In it may be traced Margaret's potent influence; moreover, it will serve as an introduction to her labors among the Iroquois of the Mountain Mission, fellow-countrymen of her whose exquisite story should be familiar to every American girl.

In the Mohawk Valley, in the center of what is now the State of New York, south of the St. Lawrence and of Lake Ontario, dwelt the fierce tribes of the lawless Five Nations. The first of these, the Agniers or Mohawks, had a little "bourgade" or "castle" called Gandahouagué. It was here, in 1656, that

Tegakwitha was born, of an Iroquois father and an Algonquin mother — the former, a pagan, the latter, a Christian. Both died during her infancy. The poor mother, unable to have her baptized, was moreover obliged to leave her in the care of a pagan uncle and aunt.

An attack of smallpox left the orphan's sight very weak. To her delicate health may be ascribed a strange taste for solitude, given by Providence to keep her stainless in the midst of many evil sights and sounds. Two other, uncommon traits were: a great liking for domestic employment (her name means "who puts things in order") and a strong repugnance to the pleasures of the chase.

Tegakwitha was growing into womanhood when three Jesuit missionaries, Pères Frémin, Bruyas and Pierron, passing through the village, were received into her uncle's lodge. The girl waited upon them, and felt mysteriously drawn to them, while they, in turn, were attracted by her modest and graceful demeanor. During the next few days, Tegakwitha's soft dark eyes followed the priests with wistful intentness, noting their zeal, charity and fervor. At last, she made known to them her desire to be a Christian, and they began to instruct her. They were, however, obliged to go on their way before the time came for her baptism.

In the meantime she was sought in marriage by eligible braves, but resisted all their advances with

an inexplicable aversion. Her determination resisted the most pressing appeals. Then Père Jacques de Lamberville came to visit the village, and her longing for baptism ardently revived. One day, while nearly all the tribe was toiling at the maize harvest, the priest went from wigwam to wigwam, visiting the sick, the aged and the infirm. Among his patients was Tegakwitha, whom a wounded foot had kept a willing prisoner. Soon he learned her story. The Jesuit's unerring glance read Tegakwitha's soul, and he promised to baptize her, after preliminary trial and instruction. This lasted through the ensuing winter, Tegakwitha's sole preoccupation being to prepare holily for so great a gift. At last, on Easter Sunday, 1676, she became a Christian, and the name of Catherine was written in the Book of Life.

The ardent convert had heard of the mission at La Prairie de la Madeleine, and fearing that bad example might tell in the long run, yearned to find a home among Christian fellow-countrymen. At La Prairie lived her adopted sister, married to a fervent Christian. The latter, at his wife's request, went with a friend to fetch Catherine Tegakwitha.

Stealing unperceived from her native village, the slender dark-eyed daughter of the Mohawks joined the two men in hunter's garb, and started northward through the forest. Her uncle, perceiving her

absence, followed hotly in pursuit; but, when he overtook the two men, his niece was safely concealed close by.

Thinking his suspicion misplaced, he retraced his saddened steps. Like shadows, the three dusky forms threaded the dim forest aisles or sat motionless in the small birch canoe as it glided smoothly over blue waters between verdant shores and glorious cloud-kissed mountain peaks. At night, wrapped in their coarse blankets, they slept, in chill starlight or intense darkness, under the flickering shadow of murmuring leaves, their sole protection against autumn wind and rain. Slowly and painfully they thus traversed the long miles that stretch between Gandahouagué and La Prairie, on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence. October frost had turned the leaves to glowing red and mellow gold when La Prairie was reached.

Catherine, with her sister and brother-in-law, dwelt with a holy Christian woman, Anastasie, who prepared her for her First Communion. From that great day, she drew ever nearer to her God. Her happiest moments were spent in a leafy oratory in the woods. There, during prayer and meditation, God infused into her soul the sublime lessons of supernatural knowledge. More than ever, her life was given to prayer and mortification. "Sometimes, during the livelong night, she would remain, a loving

watcher, before the Blessed Sacrament, wrapped in prayer and adoration."

She converted a woman named Thérèse, who, with Anastasie, became her dearest earthly friend. Before obtaining her release from earth, she was to undergo a fiery trial. Relatives, friends, her confessor himself, strove with almost cruel persistence to overcome her unchanging repulsion for marriage. . . . All was vain.

Worn out by austerity, she fell ill; but her hour had not yet come. On her recovery, she went on a visit to Montreal. There, we are told, she beheld for the first time, women vowed to the religious life. Some tell us it was the hospital nuns she saw; but as they were cloistered, it seems far more probable, as M. Faillon declares, that she met Margaret and her daughters. She may have seen them in church, or passed them in the street, casting but one look at the serene faces and sombre garb. We like to believe it was our own heroine she saw, and that the great soul looking through Margaret's clear eyes had stirred that other pure and child-like spirit. However it be, the sight of the Ville-Marie nuns inspired Catherine to make a vow of perpetual chastity. This her confessor allowed her to do, and so she was the first of her nation to become the spouse of Christ.

Soon after, a deadly languor stole over her enfeebled frame, and she lay down upon the couch of forest leaves from which she was never more to rise.

Often she would lie for hours, even days, utterly alone, while the other Indians toiled in field or forest; and her sole refreshment was the supply of maize and water left beside her by Thérèse. It is wonderful to see how brightly the light of Divine grace illuminated the mind of this poor Indian girl, who, with so few of the advantages and blessings given to us Catholics of to-day, has left so fair a record. All through that lonely solitude of her illness, she was perfectly happy, enjoying the opportunity thus given her for prayer and meditation. Little by little, her strength failed. On Holy Wednesday, 1678, after receiving the last Sacraments, her soul passed into the eternal embrace of its only Love.

Père Charlevoix tells us of the roseate glow that showed through her thin cheek, and adds: "Nothing could be more beautiful, but with that beauty which the love of virtue inspires. The people were never weary of gazing on her. . . ."

They buried her on a point of land jutting out into the river, at the foot of a large mission cross beneath whose outstretched arms she had been wont to spend long hours in prayer.

Signal favors were obtained by her intercession and at her tomb. Now, her precious bones are kept in the church at Caughnawaga, where the anniversary of the death of "*la bonne Catherine*" is kept each year with great devotion.

Let us conclude this perhaps too lengthy digression with the beautiful words that terminate what has been to us an inspiration, a remarkable article in the *Catholic World* of April, 1886: "Two hundred years and more have rolled by since the Lily of the Mohawks was laid to rest by the seething waters of the Sault St. Louis. Along the margin of the noble St. Lawrence, have arisen other shrines where God has been pleased to perform special miracles. In the solemn courts of Rome, an investigation has been lately held which resulted in the proclaiming Venerable the adopted daughter of Canada, the saintly Margaret Bourgeoys; but she for whom the honors of the altar are now solicited was in very truth, a child of the soil, a chosen soul whom her Heavenly Spouse led in the paths of perfection making 'perfect in a short space, that she might endure as an example and an ornament to the country which, recognizing her great virtue and feeling the need of a special intercessor in heaven, has risen up to call her blessed.'"



## CHAPTER XVIII.

A SPARK KINDLED — ZEAL FOR THE CONVERSION OF INDIANS — FUTILE ENDEAVORS — CHRISTIAN SETTLEMENTS — THE MOUNTAIN MISSION — EDUCATION OF INDIAN CHILDREN — THE MISSION CONFIDED TO MOTHER BOURGEOYS — DIFFICULTY AND SUCCESS — SOME BEAUTIFUL CONVERSIONS—  
SœUR BARBIER AT THE MOUNTAIN MISSION.

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**D**E MAISONNEUVE had kindled in the hearts of the nuns of Troyes a flame of apostolic zeal for the Montreal mission. These generous souls dreamed of devoting themselves to missionary toil among dusky Indians, as we dream of rest or pleasure. They saw, gleaming afar as a reward for which they scarce dared hope, the martyr's crown. They begged Our Lady to let them serve her in this distant portion of the Master's vineyard. The prayer was not granted in the way they had desired, but Mary's chosen instrument was indeed as truly a member of their Community as she could be without entering their cloister; and, in fulfilling Margaret's desires, Our Lady fulfilled those of her holy friends. For Margaret thought chiefly of the savage tribes of

Canada, when, with heart full of half-envious admiration for the Jesuit martyrs whose story had thrilled her but four years earlier, she set sail for the wilds of New France.

Yet we have seen her years and her strength spent in laboring, not among savages, but among her own fellow-countrymen; only two or three little Indian girls having been snatched by her from the darkness of their forefather's unholy creed. Has the flame of her zeal burned itself out, or has her wonted energy failed her? Ah no! from her arrival to this day, her prayers and her yearnings have risen up before God's throne in favor of those unfortunate souls. Duty keeps her at Ville-Marie — the time has not yet come for her work among the Indians.

Attempts to attract Indians to Ville-Marie, and induce them to take up their abode among the humanizing influences of a Christian town, has not been lacking. Apparently regardless of the danger to life or property, the colonists allowed redskins to enter and quit the town at will, vainly hoping thus to cultivate in them a taste for religion and civilization. Few, if any, there availed themselves of the oft-recurring opportunity. Their love for a free and roving life, their fiercely independent nature, and the unlimited facilities for gratifying the lust of battle and bloodshed afforded by the numerous international or inter-tribal wars of the period — all these kept them from living in a permanent Christian settlement.

This state of things continued until 1673. Then, having received permission in 1688, from Mgr. de Laval to labor among the Indian tribes, the Sulpicians founded a mission on the shores of Lake Ontario.

Ten arduous years of almost fruitless endeavor convinced the missionaries that the attempt was a failure. The only way to make a lasting impression was to form Christian villages, and draw the Indians nearer to the French. Acting upon this principle, the Jesuits had formed a settlement at La Prairie, near Ville-Marie. A little later, some Iroquois and other Indians expressed a wish to settle in the Island of Montreal, and in 1676, the Sulpicians began a similar one, called the Mountain Mission, on the slope of Mount Royal where the Montreal College now stands.

Speaking of this foundation, Margaret Bourgeoys, in her autograph letters, says it was the "first place in this Island where the Indians came for instruction." Quarrels having arisen among the chiefs at La Prairie, some of the Indians came from there to join those at the Mountain, and the former settlement was transferred to Sault St. Louis, now Caughnawaga. When the Mission opened, there were about one hundred and twenty Iroquois, of whom perhaps half were baptized. Before long the number increased until the presence of the Christian Indians became a safeguard to the colony, a protection against the attacks of their infidel brethren.

No sooner had Father Tronson heard of the Mountain Mission than he wrote to Father Bailly, who was in charge of it, urging him to do all in his power to win the children's hearts. "M. Colbert," he continued, "heartily approves of your plan for the establishment of small Indian schools; he is convinced that nothing more useful could be done. It is a work to which every energy must be applied, and to which you must contribute all that the state of the house allows. Therefore, spare nothing for the instruction of those children. . . . I dined with M. Colbert a few days ago, and he lent his gracious attention to what I told him about our affairs." Father Tronson advised the priests of the Seminary to take charge of the boys, while the Sisters of the Congregation taught the girls. M. de Belmont, then only a deacon who had given up all earthly possessions to devote himself to the Mountain Mission, was named in 1680 to direct the boys' school.\*

Upon his arrival, M. de Belmont erected a chapel which he dedicated to Notre Dame des Neiges, patroness of the little village. This village consisted at first of a few huts built of bark and placed at regular

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\* Some authors have supposed that the Mission began as early as 1657, but this appears impossible, when we recollect that, for twenty years or more, settlers scarcely dared quit the town for fear of the Iroquois who tracked them to their very doorsteps! Moreover, the first registrations of the Mountain Mission date from 1688, and note that all previous baptisms had been set down in the Ville-Marie register; the latter, before 1677, makes no mention of the aforesaid Mission.

intervals. In these huts the two nuns sent by Mother Bourgeoys lived and taught. The priests fared no better. As the converts became more numerous, it was soon deemed necessary to add to the number of missionaries, and the little cabins erected for them were enlarged by the addition of a shed, previously used as a stable.

The pagan Iroquois threatened the Christians. To protect the imperilled Mission village from its savage enemies, M. de Belmont had a wooden fort built, closely surrounded by strong stakes. This was done in 1685. There is a letter from Father de Tronson, dated 1686, which refers to these improvements in a tone suggestive of rather ironical banter: "I should have been pleased to see the plan of your village and of your fort, with its four bastions, protecting the chapel. You did well to lengthen your building. Moreover, your donkey must be of a very good family since his apartment, added to your house, serves now as the refectory and recreation hall for the Community."\* As time went on, the fortifications were strengthened, so that, however numerous or determined, the unconverted Iroquois never succeeded in forcing their way into the Mission village.

Until this date little had been successfully done for the education of Indian children. The government had placed a few girls in the Ursuline Convent in Quebec, but even the devotion and care of the

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\* Faillon, *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, p. 304.

nuns were not always fruitful. In 1662, that ardent and enlightened apostle, Ven. Mother Mary of the Incarnation, writes from out the depths of her saddened heart: "Drink is the ruin of our poor Christian Indians. Men and women, even boys and girls, are addicted to this habit, and they soon fall easy victims to the vice of drunkenness which leads them to the commission of the most frightful deeds of violence and excesses of every kind. We have demonstrated to our Indian day scholars the evils to which they are subjecting themselves by following their parents' example. Since then they have not set foot in our convent." Even the boarders did not always give satisfaction. At least, in 1683, M. de Meulles, who seems to have been unduly prejudiced, wrote to M. de Seignelay: "Nothing is more useless than to place Indians with the Ursulines, because the austerity of the religious life is most uncongenial to the savage mind. Therefore it is true than no sooner have the Indian girls left these religious than they pass from one extreme to the other." \* The severe judgment pronounced by the Intendant must not lead our readers to disparage the wonderful conquests of grace achieved by Venerable Mary of the Incarnation and by her daughters in Quebec and its environs. None who have read her admirable life can fail to admire her whom a grateful posterity salutes with a title than which none can be more glorious,

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\* Faillon, *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeois*, p. 285.

"The St. Teresa of Canada." However, M. de Seignelay, son of Colbert and his successor as *Ministre de la Marine*, convinced that a cloistered life was unsuited to these children, resolved to confide to Mother Bourgeoys all those of the Mountain Mission, and informed M. de Meulles, the following year, that the King did not wish them to be sent to Quebec. To enable Mother Bourgeoys to take charge of them, he obtained from his royal master not only the 300 livres requested by the Intendant, but also a new gratuity of 2,000 livres, of which 1,000 was to purchase wool and thread that the children might be taught to spin, to knit and to sew, and 1,000 livres for the needs of the seamstresses who would be their teachers. Later, he sent out three women to teach the Indian girls to knit, and three others to instruct them in spinning and lace-making. The afore-mentioned sums of money were to be handed over to Mother Bourgeoys to be used as she saw fit.

In 1683, two Congregation nuns were sent to teach the Indians at Sault St. Louis, but the Mission did not succeed and had to be relinquished.

The King's full approval and prompt support, far from elating Mother Bourgeoys, made her tremble at the thought of assuming so heavy a responsibility in addition to her other cares. Into her hands was to be committed the care of all the Indian girls of the Mission, to her would each one of these souls look for its sorely-needed measure of light and faith, of

knowledge and civilization. Then again, all her efforts might end in failure, and those little ones, raised for a while from the mire of ignorance and crime, might fall again, and sink yet more deeply than before. This at least was what some short-sighted people repeatedly told her, among others the prosperous merchant LeBer. The failure of the Saint Louis Mission may also have contributed towards her hesitation in undertaking the Mountain Mission. To hasten her acquiescence, Father de Tronson wrote to M. de Belmont on March 26, 1686: "None here would agree with Monsieur LeBer, nor would this proposition be approved of at Court. It is desired that Indian girls as well as boys be Frenchified; and that is possible only if they are made to attend school or subjected to the influence of the home life of the convent. It seems to me that by taking them at an earlier age, keeping them for a shorter time and less closely confined, the evils he mentions might be remedied, and Sister Bourgeoys will, if she listens to your reasoning, no longer be alarmed."

Not only the magnitude of the proposed task, but a deep rooted and entirely sincere conviction of her own weakness and unworthiness made Margaret hesitate. However, the spirit of the Apostles shone too brightly in her soul not to be the unfailing guide of all her actions. Mother Bourgeoys beheld in this new Mission a clear answer to the ardent petitions of the nuns of Troyes, as well as a proof that the prayers so



often offered for the Iroquois by Jeanne Mance and the first settlers had been graciously heard and were now bearing fruit. How often had the hardy pioneers knelt before the Mountain Cross in supplication, to obtain the conversion of the Indians and as Margaret tells, "to see them come with submission to be instructed. It is, in fact," she continues, "the first place to which they came to be instructed by the Sisters of the Congregation." In this may be traced some connection with the picture given to Maison-neuve, before his departure, by his sister, a religious of the Congregation of Troyes, around which was written in letters of gold:

Mother of God on thy true heart we call,  
Grant us a dwelling in thy Montreal.

One of the first mentions of her labors appears in a letter from Monsieur de Chesneau, M. de Meulles' predecessor, to the Minister of Finance and bearing the date of November 13, 1681: "In the Mountain Mission and that of Sault de la Prairie de la Madeleine, (Sault St. Louis) in those of Sillery and Lorette, the only Indian villages we have, boys are now being taught to read and write. In the Mountain Mission of Montreal the Congregation nuns apply themselves to the instruction of little girls and make them do needle work." His successor writes two years later: "The priests of St. Sulpice have formed two classes in which are taught the little Indians of the Mountain. In one there are only boys, whom they

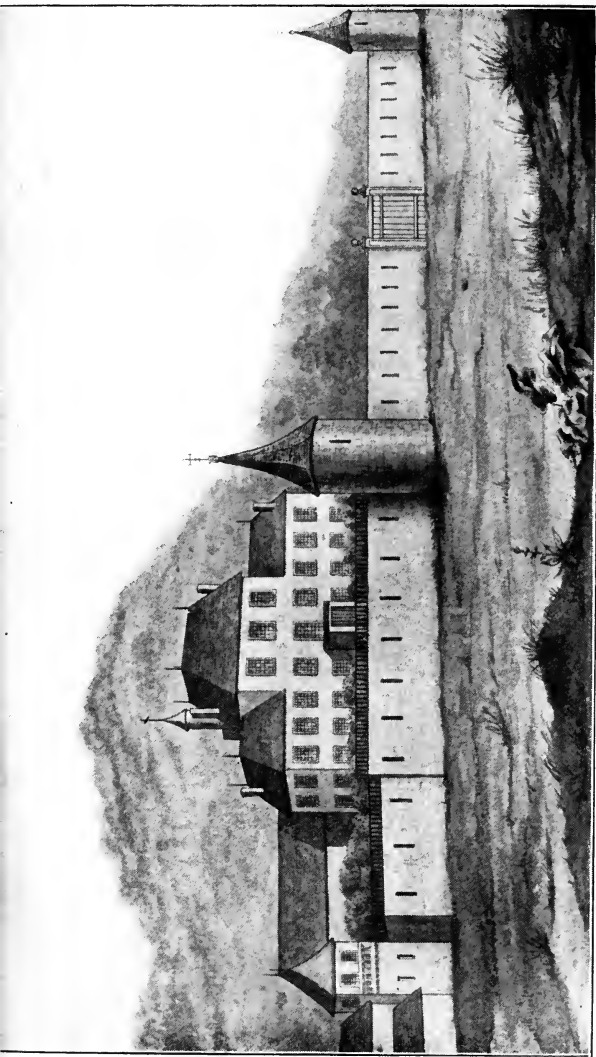
themselves teach. Two Sisters of the Congregation are in charge of the second, where the little girls are. They are careful to teach them the truths of the Faith, to make them sing in church, to show them how to read, write, speak French, and all that is necessary for girls." It was, no doubt, his warm appreciation which led, as we have seen, to Margaret's being placed in charge of all the Indian girls.

One of Mother Bourgeoys' first endeavors was to instil into her pupils love of work and habits of industry, both thoroughly alien to the Indian nature, ease-loving and impatient of all restraint. Her next care was to instruct them in the rudiments of civilization together with the first notions of religion, of reading and writing.

While writing or reading these things, how little we realize all that the words imply! Let us stop one moment to look more closely at the life of the Mountain Mission. The village itself was barely worthy of the name — a few bark-built huts of irregular shapes, or perhaps mere Indian wigwams,\* as they are usually represented. One of the nuns' huts served as a dwelling-place; around its smoke-blackened walls were pinned a few religious pictures—its sole ornament. The second one was the school, with crucifix, statue, rough table and a few rude benches. Into it were led the first red-skinned pupils.

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\* Faillon, *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, p. 279.



### THE PRIESTS' FORT.

This Fort was so called to distinguish it from the enclosure next to it, and which being surrounded by a Palisade was known as the Indians' Fort. Both constructions formed part of the same outwork and are mentioned under the common title of "The Mountain Fort." The Priests' Fort was built in 1694, by the Sulpician Francois Vachon de Belin ont, at his own expense. It was, 1<sup>st</sup> A square enclosed by a stone wall with port holes and flanked by a tower at each angle. 2<sup>o</sup> The Fort proper or Manor, in the middle of the enclosure where the Missionaries lived. 3<sup>o</sup> The chapel which was opposite the Manor and between the two towers. In 1844, the erection of the vast edifice now used as a College and Seminary was begun on this very site. The two towers then left standing are still to be seen and are all that is left of the old "Priests' Fort." They, and the wall connecting them, are over two hundred years old, and are, after the Montreal Seminary, the oldest buildings in Montreal. In the west tower, was the school for Indian girls, and the east tower was the home of the Sisters of the Congregation who taught them. In 1824, this east tower was transformed into a chapel where, since 1796, have lain the bodies of two fervent neophytes, the aged warrior Francois Thoronhiogo, and his granddaughter, Thérèse Gamensaqtois who had taught thirteen years as a Congregation Nun.

(Extract from manuscripts belonging to Jacques Viger.)



In the beginning they were dirty, half-clothed, restless, shrinking in sullen timidity from the gentle teacher's advances, their bright eyes peeping through unkempt locks of coarse black hair and roving from side to side like those of some caged wild thing. Little by little, love and patience won the day, and a wonderful change took place. The matted hair was combed and tied, the frowsy blanket, their sole garment, was exchanged for neat dresses, often cut and sewed by the nuns' skilful hands. The idle fingers, after the first awkward attempts, learned to hold the needle and to ply it quickly and well. Soon they took pleasure in spinning wool and knitting stockings. Then they learned the meaning of the strange black marks on the white pages of the teacher's book, and how to copy the characters traced by her pen. They learned to love God, their Father, and the Mother whose statue smiled down so sweetly upon them, and to follow a rule other than their own passionate, wayward will.

Only constant repetition and unwearied patience, seconded by secret prayers and sufferings, enabled the two nuns thus verily to "renew the face of the earth" and "instruct the hearts" of their pupils, whose number grew day by day.

The good seed was falling where the soil was new and rich and bore within itself all the unweakened vigor of primitive nature; it put forth flower and fruit with beautiful luxuriance. All this gave grea

joy to the brave workers. What music in their ears was the first prayer that fell from their pupils' lips, and what happiness to mark their first efforts at self-control and self-denial! Very soon, some of the Indians gave such proofs of good-will and intelligence that Mother Bourgeoys decided to have them trained to help, at least by example, in teaching their companions. They were sent as boarders to Ville-Marie, that, being removed from evil influences, their training might be attended with less danger and temptation.

In 1685, Mgr. de St. Vallier visited the Mountain Mission and gave this account of its success: "The daughters of the Congregation, now spread over the different parts of Canada, have in the Mountain Mission a school consisting of about forty Indian girls, whom they clothe and bring up 'à la française.' They are also taught the mysteries of Faith, manual labor, the hymns and prayers of the Church, not only in their own tongue but also in ours, that they may be brought little by little to our manners and customs. There are some of those girls who, for several years, have conceived the desire of giving themselves to God with the Congregation nuns, whose rules and observances they follow. But it has not been thought expedient to let them contract vows, and it will be allowed only after long and careful trial." \*

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\* Faillon, *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, (Paris, Poussielgue, Rusand, Pèrisse frères, 1853, p. p. 291, 292.

"The inhabitants of this village are Hurons and Iroquois, not mere converts, but fervent Christians who have been gathered together and trained by the zealous care of the Sulpicians. Life there is that of the cloister, and all virtues are practised according to the rules of highest evangelical perfection. There is always somebody praying in the chapel; no one ever speaks there, and some to punish themselves for a slight fault, stand like humble penitents at the door. They strive most earnestly to preserve their innocence unsullied and to be always and everywhere recollected. When they have spoken to God with childlike confidence, they make the huts and fields ring with pious hymns, while they are engaged in work or in household duties. When they meet, they excite each other to virtue by holy conversations, and are ever most charitable among themselves." M. Faillon, after reproducing Mgr. de St. Vallier's enthusiastic report, adds that the Bishop's impression had been slightly partial and superficial. . . . "If many Indians were as he has depicted them, it is certain that all did not give the same consolation to their missionaries, and that, among those of the Mountain in particular, some there were who grieved them by their propensity to drunkenness and their relapses into this vice."

Perhaps the fairest blossoms that bloomed in the Mountain Mission were two Indian maidens, Marie Barbe Attontinon and Marie Thérèse Gannensagouas.

The former was born in the village of Onnontaguè. Mother Bourgeoys writes of her: "She was baptized at the Mountain and came to our house to enter the Community. She was received, took the habit, and made the promises as they were then made. She remained with us twelve years and died a holy death, aged about thirty-five." Gannensagouas came from Tsonnonthonan and was one of the first pupils of the Mountain Mission, where she received Baptism on the 28th of June, 1681, at the age of fourteen. After four years' sojourn in the Iroquois village, and after her reception in the Community, she became a teacher in the same school. M. Belmont says of her: "The virtues that shone most brightly in her soul were modesty, silence and mortification. As a teacher, she did every duty with admirable perfection, until the age of twenty-seven." Then, having attained the limit of her years, she was stricken by a lingering illness. As its mortal vesture wasted gradually away, the angelic soul seemed to grow ever stronger and more holy.

In 1685, while the mission was still in its infancy, Marie Barbier, who had been six or seven years in the Community, was sent as teacher to the Mountain school. She was an ardent soul, in whom Mother Bourgeoys' virtues were reflected as in a mirror, especially our heroine's love of suffering and poverty. When she came into the poor hut that was to be her home, the first impression was one of fear and



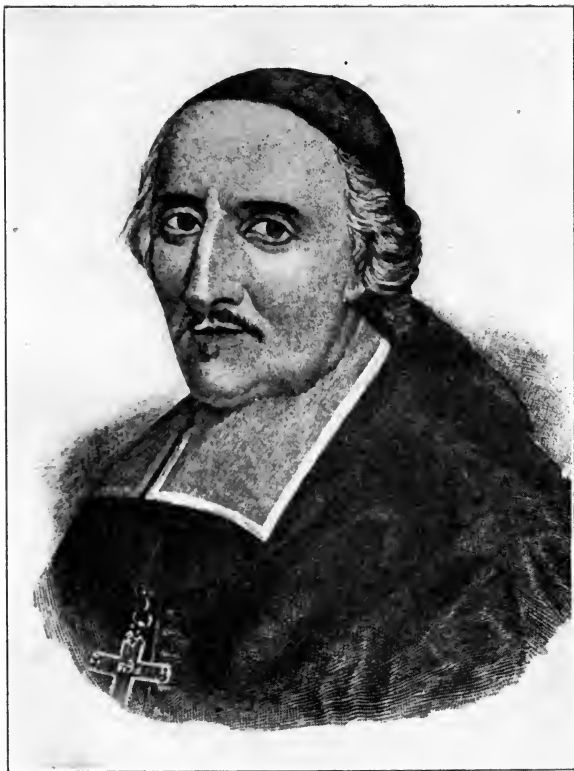
disappointment. "Every thing was spotlessly clean and nothing was lacking in the hut. I looked around," she tells us, "'with saddened heart,' saying nothing, save to God. To Him I made this prayer: 'My God, this is not the place Thou hast chosen for me, I should be too comfortable here — dost Thou will to destroy me? Rather would I die than live in such comfort!' I slept here but one night, the Community having changed its plans and decided to send me to the Isle of Orleans. Sister Anne, who was to be my companion, came up to the Mission to get me. On entering the hut, she said to me: 'Sister, God does not want you here. You must suffer all sorts of privations. The hut, which I see so well adorned, makes my heart bleed for you. We must all suffer in this life, and suffering is what God asks of you.' These words were in perfect harmony with the attraction of my soul. The companion who was to have been with me at the Mountain was grieved at the unexpected change. She advised me to request to be left there, but I replied that I wished to obey, and that it would be a great mercy if God willed me to die of fatigue and privation at the Isle of Orleans. I therefore returned to the Community, and embarked two days later." Such are the mysterious instincts of sanctity.

When speaking of Gannensagouas we would fain have related the touching story of her grandfather, Francois Thoronhiongo, who had been baptized by

Père de Brébeuf, the glorious martyr. It is told by M. Faillon, but would for us be too lengthy a digression.

One brief anecdote will give some idea of the dear old Indian's simplicity and fervor. One day, as he sat mending the bark door of a hut, he suddenly remembered that he had made three stitches with his awl before offering his work to God. He cried, remorsefully: "Ah, wretch that I am, there are three stitches lost! I forgot to offer them to the Master of my life!"





MGR. FRANÇOIS DE MONTMORENCY LAVAL

## CHAPTER XIX.

RESUMING THE NARRATIVE — FIRST CANADIAN  
POSTULANTS — TERRIBLE TRIAL — PROVIDENCE  
CARES FOR ITS OWN — MGR. DE LAVAL'S PRO-  
POSAL — CONFIDENCE AGAIN REWARDED — CON-  
VENT REBUILT — INFLUX OF NOVICES — WHAT  
MARGARET REQUIRED OF HER DAUGHTERS. . . .

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**L**EAVING the Mountain Mission, we must now go back a few years and take up our story at the close of Margaret Bourgeoys' last trip to France.

Not long after her arrival in Montreal, there came to the convent a young postulant, the first Canadian girl to enter the Community. God now showed that Margaret's failure had been one only in appearance, for the time had come when the Order was to recruit its members, not in far-off France, but in the New World. We have already learned that this first postulant was Marie Barbier, one of our heroine's first pupils, who had passed from childhood to womanhood under Margaret's watchful care. A year later, six more Canadians followed Sister Barbier's example. We find their names in the register: Marie

Denis, Madeleine Bourbault, Marie Charly, (afterwards Jeanne LeBer's closest friend), Francoise Lemoyne, Catherine Bony, Catherine Charly. Like their predecessor, they had all been trained by Margaret Bourgeoys from their earliest years. In giving to their work their youthful strength and intellect, they were but allowing her to reap the harvest patiently sown by her own hand through years of hardship and danger.

The Community now consisted of eighteen members. Its winter had been long and drear. The seed hidden in the virgin soil of Ville-Marie took many years to ripen and expand. Slowly it pushed its tender green shoot through the cold earth, then the first leaves came out one by one. At last, it burst into foliage and grew to be a great tree; and its branches sheltered innumerable souls, who, soaring above all earthly things, lived but to praise and glorify God. Three years went by, and years of labor they were, both among the children of the colonists and among those of the Indian tribes.

In 1683, during the night from the 6th to the 7th of December, a terrible misfortune befell the Community. The midnight darkness was suddenly illumined by a fierce, red light, and angry flames shed their lurid reflection upon the snow-covered ground. There were cries and prayers and wild hurrying to and fro; but the hungry fire did its work, and under the eyes of Mother Bourgeoys and her nuns the convent

gradually became a mass of charred ruins. Calm and collected, the Superior saw her only shelter consumed. Silently she accepted the sacrifice and bowed her head under the hand of God. A worse trial was in store. Suddenly, while smoke and flames were at their worst, a cry went up: "Two of our Sisters are missing!" None can venture into the seething mass of fire nor face the blinding smoke. Margaret sinks to her knees, and gazes, in heart-broken anguish, at the burning building in which two of her spiritual daughters, one of them her own niece, are enduring all the tortures of a fiery death. All through the tragic hours of that terrible night, not a murmur fell from her white lips, and nothing but resignation looked out of her weary eyes. Yet none felt so keenly all that this misfortune meant to the Community, and she mourned the death of her nuns even more for its sake than for the pain inflicted on her own loving heart.

Another cause of grief was her conviction that she was to blame for the accident. She says: "It was a just punishment for my weakness when, led by a spirit opposed to the poverty, humility and mortification in which we should live, I consented to the erection of this large house. It was built to preserve us from some slight inconveniences in our first lodging, with which we should have been satisfied." The loss of the house itself she did not mourn. On the contrary: "The fire gave me more pleasure than

regret because of the reasons that led to the building of this large house."

We are not told where the survivors lodged after their home was consumed. Perhaps they were received by the Hotel-Dieu nuns, or found a temporary refuge in the Ouvroir, a house used by the pupils of their industrial school and known as "La Providence." However this may be, the following days were very trying, filled with many privations and great fatigue.

The whole town was stirred by the sad event. Sympathy for Mother Bourgeoys and her daughters was as widespread as it was sincere. We find it mentioned in the writings of the day. Father Tronson wrote from France: "The destruction of the Congregation Convent and, above all, the loss of the two nuns, has filled us with compassion." Mgr. de Laval says to Father de Casson: "I have been deeply moved by this accident and particularly by the death of Sisters Genevieve and Marguerite, who perished in the flames. They were indeed ripe for Heaven, yet still very necessary to the Community. God's judgments differ widely from those of men, therefore must we adore the secret designs of His Providence, and humbly submit. I am writing a hasty word to Sister Marguerite Bourgeoys." The death of the two noble women, Sisters Durosoy and Soumillard, who perished in the burning of the convent seemed to indicate in a mysterious way God's will that Mother Bourgeoys



should still retain the office of Superior of the Community. On her return from France she had reiterated her desire to be relieved of her charge, and her sisters had begun to consider the selection of her successor. But as the two members of the Community, whom the fire had claimed for its victims, were thought to be the most suitable to succeed the venerable foundress, their untimely death put an end for a time to all talk of electing a new superior.

The Congregation was reduced to such dire poverty that Mgr. de Laval considered it impossible, humanly speaking, for it to recover from the effects of its loss. He settled at last upon what to him seemed the only means of enabling its members to continue their fruitful labors in Ville-Marie — admittance into the Ursuline order. This, of course, would mean the adoption of the rules followed by a cloistered order and would be in direct contradiction to the aim of Margaret's foundation. Taken up with his own views, and sincerely anxious to help Sister Bourgeoys in her need, Mgr. de Laval did not stop to consider this fact. The Ursulines wrote to Ville-Marie expressing their willingness to open a convent there. Obedience to authority was one of Mother Bourgeoys' most striking virtues. At a word from M. de Queylus she had interrupted a cherished task — the building of a church in Our Lady's honor. . . . Will she now set aside the end towards which she has tended so faithfully and so strenuously? No; then it was her

own desires she was sacrificing; but now to remove the distinctive traits of her Community would be to oppose God's will and relinquish a sacred mission. Strengthened by this conviction, Margaret, with all due respect joined to unwavering firmness, set forth her reasons for declining to consider the Bishop's proposal. The good she purposed to achieve was not compatible with the restrictions imposed on a cloistered order. To join such an order were to act in opposition to what seemed God-sent inspirations. Besides, Our Blessed Lady, to whom the Congregation was especially consecrated, had given other proofs of her approval. Again, apart from the instruction of young girls, Margaret aimed at saving many Christian maidens whose poverty would otherwise debar them from consecrating themselves to God in other religious orders, all of which exacted a dower. Her intention had ever been to throw open her doors to all fitted for religious life. So little did she care for money that she would gladly seek out and take into her arms any girl, however destitute of earthly goods, if she only possessed good-will and a true vocation.

Mgr. de Laval, who had ever felt the greatest admiration for Mother Bourgeoys, appreciated the strength of her arguments, and desisted from his efforts. He was then thinking of resigning his arduous duties, and could but imitate our heroine's simple

reliance on God, leaving the impoverished Community in the hands of an all-wise Providence.

This child-like confidence did not lead Mother Bourgeoys to fold her hands and idly wait for God's hour. Rather did she pray as if God alone were to do everything, then work as if her unaided efforts were the only resources at her disposal.

No sooner was her home burned down than she set about erecting another — for God's work could not wait, must not be neglected. Though she still looked upon the building of the larger convent as an unwarranted luxury, she realized that it must be replaced by one even better fitted to receive all her companions and a still greater number of pupils. It really seemed as though God had allowed the disaster to compel the Congregation to erect a yet larger convent in a more appropriate locality. The parish church had been built in the upper town where the Seminary had opened thoroughfares. Since then the people had, in great part, forsaken their first quarters by the riverside, and moved up to the higher level. The Sulpicians decided to erect a new Seminary there; so, being obliged to build, Mother Bourgeoys, in accordance with the wishes of the sisterhood, settled upon this new situation for the new convent. This was all the more feasible since they already had there some land, part of which was used as a garden. By the addition of a few acres, which the Seminary would willingly give,

the property of the Congregation would adjoin that of the Hotel-Dieu.

However, Margaret's hands were empty; how rebuild? As the Marquis de Denonville wrote to the Minister in 1684: "The Congregation nuns, who do so much good in the colony under Sister Bourgeoys' guidance, were burnt out last year. They lost everything. It would be necessary for them to rebuild, but they have not a penny to begin with." M. Tronson had supposed that the news of the accident would draw from the French Court some large compensation, but the King gave only five hundred livres. Never had so small a gift been bestowed in like circumstances upon any institution.\*

Now, at last, our heroine's confidence will surely give way. If so, her discouragement showed itself in a strange manner. She drew up a paper, duly signed by each of the nuns, by which she hoped to draw down God's blessing on an enterprise the success of which she committed to Him alone. "We have written a document," says she, "in which we declared to God that we asked this re-establishment of our convent, only to prove more faithful than in the past to the practise of Christian perfection." The nuns' solemn pledge was made in all earnestness and sincerity. God did not fail to ratify it by doing His share fully and swiftly. Hearts were stirred to

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\* Faillon, *Vie de la Ven Mère Bourgeoys*, Vol. II. p. 352.

sympathy, not passive merely, but active and generous. Before long there were enough funds to build a stone house larger and more solid than the former one, and more convenient both for the nuns and their pupils.

Mother Juchereau, in her "*Histoire de l'Hôtel Dieu de Quebec*," pays this tribute to the Congregation nuns: "They were so full of confidence in God, they began to build with only forty sous in their possession. Their hope was not confounded, for, though their funds were small, Providence helped them so powerfully that they have established one of the most flourishing communities in Canada. The odor of its virtues spreads throughout the land." Soeur Morin adds: "After their second house, a stone one, had been destroyed by fire, the Congregation nuns built a third convent on the site they still occupy; their house touches our enclosure, making us neighbors; the house is large and spacious, and one of the best built in town." Mgr. de Saint Vallier, having seen the nuns some time after the fire, remarks: "How they subsisted since the accident which befell them three or four years ago is truly a marvel. Their entire house was burned in one night, they saved neither their furniture nor their wardrobe, happy enough in this that they were themselves rescued; even then, two of their number perished in the flames. The courage of the survivors bore them up in their extreme poverty. Though

they numbered over thirty, Providence cared for all their most pressing wants. It almost seems as though this calamity served only to make them holier and more useful to their neighbor, for there is not one good work which, since that time, they have failed to undertake."

After such a catastrophe it would have seemed only natural that young girls should hesitate to face untold hardship in an impoverished Community. Yet drawn by a clearly supernatural attraction, they flocked to Mother Bourgeoys for admission. Within two years more than forty postulants were received. So does God carve victories out of defeats and prosperity out of adversity. Margaret herself expresses something of wondering admiration when, alluding to this rapid increase of membership in her community, she writes: "Yet I never promised them ought save poverty and simplicity." When giving the holy habit to a novice, it was her wont to repeat: "My dear sister, be ever lowly, humble and poor," and to all the would-be nuns her most frequent admonition was: "Any one who seeks admission into this Community must make up her mind to quit all worldly principles. She must forsake self as well, overcoming temper, bad habits, and natural inclinations. She must rid herself of undue attachment to parents, friends, and all that uselessly absorbs the mind. To her I say that she may be set to the meanest tasks, may be sent on mission with a companion specially

charged to contradict her in everything, even so far as to silence her that a little girl may speak, sparing her no humiliation or mortification. Once admitted, let her fear to prove unfaithful to God, to Whom she has given herself. Let her obey those to whom she is subject promptly in all things. She must be poor of heart. Her words, gestures, gait must show neither levity nor giddiness, but she must behave everywhere with modesty, recollection and piety. She must mortify her senses, avoid useless conversations, and ever strive to walk in the presence of God." Such was the bright ideal Mother Bourgeoys set before the eyes of her children, and of which she was herself a living embodiment.

Side by side with her advice concerning personal sanctification, we may place that which tended to instruct the religious in their duty to their pupils: "The Sisters of the Congregation should be skilled in needlework of every description, that they may teach children to avoid idleness, the source of all vice, by which virtue is constantly endangered. It is therefore necessary to make the children work, both in the day-schools and in the boarding-schools." Elsewhere she adds: "The Blessed Virgin received both kings and shepherds with equal affection; like her, the Sisters of the Congregation must not favor rich children more than poor ones, but cherish both with equal charity. If they have any preference, it should be for the most destitute; the Blessed Virgin

being present with her Son at the marriage-feast of Cana only because the people were poor and in need of assistance."

Poverty, as we have seen, was no obstacle to the admission of a novice, but we must not suppose that applicants were indiscriminately welcome. Though unmoved by name, wealth or talent, Margaret required that postulants should have not only the will to become perfect, but also the requisite aptitudes. What she sought is set forth in a beautiful prayer, still daily recited by her daughters:

"My Mother, I ask of Thee, for our Community, neither the wealth, honors, nor pleasures of this life. I pray thee only to obtain that God be therein faithfully served; and that there be received none of those proud and presumptuous spirits whose hearts are of the world, who are addicted to back-biting or scoffing and who strive not to practise the maxims which Our Lord, Thy Divine Son, has taught, which He has sealed with His blood and which thou, O most holy Virgin, didst so exactly observe."

Under this wise, firm and loving guidance, the young girls of all classes learned to love God and their neighbor. Daughters of nobles, merchants, artisans, habitants, Indians, even; whether of gentle or lowly birth, rich or poor — all were received with equal tenderness, bound together by charity and humility, and led by Margaret Bourgeoys to the higher life.



In November, 1684, not a year after the great fire, M. de Denonville visited Montreal. He was much impressed by the Congregation and wrote as follows to the Minister of Marine, recommending one of the most useful foundations: "At Ville-Marie in the Island of Montreal I found the Sisters of the Congregation under Sister Bourgeoys' direction. Their presence is a great advantage to the entire colony. Moreover, I saw an establishment of Daughters of Providence, who work in common. These so-called Daughters of Providence, all grown-up girls to the number of twenty, are trained and formed to work by this sister. They might begin some manufacture there, if you would offer them some slight gratuity."

Such was the life of the Community at Ville-Marie. We have seen its solicitude extended to the red-skinned children of the forest, it is now time to watch it spreading over the colony and sending out missionaries to scatter the good seed far and wide.

## CHAPTER XX.

A BIT OF HISTORY — CANADIAN MISSIONS — AN ELOQUENT PLEA — POVERTY OF FIRST HOUSES — MARGARET'S PARTING WORDS — THE CONGREGATION'S PATRONAL FEAST — THE ISLE OF ORLEANS TRANSFORMED—WORDS OF PRAISE—THE "HOPITAL GENERAL"—A HEROIC UNDERTAKING — SPIRITUAL TRIALS — THE QUEBEC FOUNDATIONS AGAIN — PROVIDENCE INTERFERES ONCE MORE — NEW MISSIONS ESTABLISHED.

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WE have left the Mountain Mission, have seen the Ville-Marie Convent rise again from its ashes; now before following the Congregation in its apostolic journeys, we might ask: What was the state of Canada in those latter years of the seventeenth century?\*

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\* In describing the latter years of our heroine's life, it has been almost impossible to observe, with strict accuracy, the chronological order. Events follow each other rapidly, and at times so many occur simultaneously, that the attempt leads only to greater confusion.

In 1688, the French in Canada and Acadia numbered about 12,000. Warfare against the Iroquois was being carried on with great vigor by the French, especially under de Denonville. He drew down everlasting disgrace upon his name by treacherously seizing the principal chiefs, by him convoked, under various pretexts, at Cataraqui, now Kingston, and despatching them to France to work in the galleys. This dastardly act exasperated an already blood-thirsty foe.

On the fifth of August, 1689, the Iroquois made a savage descent on the unsuspecting inhabitants of Lachine — a prosperous village on the outskirts of Montreal. At midnight, the Indian war-whoop mingled with the piercing shrieks of the women and children, while the glare of burning homesteads turned the sky to a vivid red that seemed to reflect itself upon the blood-stained earth. The cruel retaliation was not left unpunished. Under gallant de Frontenac and prudent de Callières the Iroquois tribes were routed in divers encounters, then finally reconciled with the French and with their Indian foes.

At the same time a great international conflict was disturbing the country; the Anglo-French struggle known as King William's War, lasted from 1685 to 1697. When the state of a country at war, with its unsettled, terrorized condition, is taken into account, we cannot but feel greater admiration for the noble

women, who calm and fearless, pursued their missionary labors with undiminished zeal.

A word has been said about Margaret's solicitude for the conversion of the Indian children. We must not suppose her great heart became any the less zealous for the children of the French. One after the other, she sent her daughters to open convents throughout the colony. When, in later years, a mistaken and over-zealous desire to lighten the labors of the Community led some authorities to urge objections against its missionary undertakings, she drew from her apostolic heart these almost inspired words: "We are asked," she wrote, "why we open missions which expose us to many sufferings, nay, even to capture and to death at the hands of the Iroquois. Here is our answer: The apostles went forth into every quarter of the globe to preach Jesus Christ; like them we feel urged to make Him known in every part of this country to which we may be sent. If the Apostles gave labor, life, all they could possess in this world to make God known, why should not the Daughters of the Congregation sacrifice health, satisfaction, rest, life itself, for the religious and the moral education of girls? Our Lord asked His Apostles whether they could drink of His chalice, and the Daughters of this Community are asked whether they can embrace poverty and contempt. In order to teach freely, they must be content with little, deprive themselves of all, and live everywhere in poverty.

Like the Apostles, they must work even at night, to earn their living and be a burden to none. This Community must be an image of the Apostolic College; but the latter I would compare to a star in the firmament, and the former to a snowflake that falls in the shape of a star and melts at the least touch of heat. Therefore, to preserve and increase God's grace within our Community, it is necessary to make Divine Wisdom pass before human prudence." Sublime as are these words in their humility and abnegation, we shall find them fully realized in her who wrote them, and in those of whom she wrote.

Margaret herself tells us that, in the first missions, the nuns had no beds, sheets or mattresses; they lacked many needed utensils, and lived as the poorest of the poor. The good they did was the abundant fruitage of utter self-denial and well-nigh unlimited privation. The secret of the fortitude that made them bear all with joyous courage lay in their purity of intention. God and souls, that was the dual love which bore them up, for "love feels no burden, regards not labors . . . when weary it is not tired, when straightened it is not constrained, when frightened it is not disturbed." (Imit. Book III., ch V.)

Margaret fostered in their hearts the love which works such wonders and the remembrance of her parting words must have been a constant stimulus for the often sorely-tried missionaries: "Think, my dear sisters, that in your missions you are going forth

to gather up the spilled drops of the Blood of Jesus Christ. Oh! how happy would be each sister sent on mission if she reflected that she goes thither by God's command and in His company; if she reflected that by her labors she can and should prove her gratitude towards Him from Whom she has received all things! Ah! then will she find nothing hard or annoying! On the contrary, her desire will be to want all things, to be despised by all, to suffer every torment, even to die in ignominy."

These words shed a bright light upon the spirit and aim of Our Lady's Congregation, and on the wisdom of her who so strenuously opposed its being incorporated or transformed into a cloistered order. We may have been tempted to ask, as her contemporaries did, why she did not enter one of the many already existing in the Church? A community of uncloistered women was almost unknown at this time; such had not as yet been required. Different ages have different needs and what Vincent of Paul, through his uncloistered Sisters of Charity was doing in France for the poor, Margaret Bourgeoys was to achieve in the New World for the education of childhood. Her ideal was to imitate Our Lady's life of Apostolic zeal, not only in the care of the Infant Church after her Son's Ascension, but specially when she visited her cousin Elizabeth. Like her, Margaret's ambition was to carry Jesus to the hearts and homes in which He had no place. Listen to her

own words: "Our Lady's visit to Saint Elizabeth was the immediate occasion of a great miracle; the liberation of John the Baptist from the bonds of original sin, his sanctification and that of his whole family. This is the model to be placed before the Sisters' eyes when they go on mission with the intention of contributing to the sanctification of children."

In this again we discover why the mystery of the Visitation was chosen to be the patronal feast of Margaret Bourgeoys' Community. That solemn celebration recalls to each missionary the ideal to which tend her daily labors and gives her fresh strength to face trial and fatigue.

From principles we return to facts. Annals of the first missions are few and slender, because of the disturbed state of the country, and because of the successive fires which have consumed some of the Community's most interesting records. Enough remains to show us that as early as 1676 several missions had already been opened outside of Montreal. In one of Mgr. de Laval's letters he speaks of Mother Bourgeoys' labors "in Montreal and elsewhere." This probably refers to the schools opened in the parishes of Champlain and Batiscan, mentioned by M. de Meulles in 1683, and which were closed later on.

Having now gained a general idea of what the nuns had to do and suffer, more minute study of one foundation will throw a clearer light upon all. In 1865

the parish of the Holy Family in the Isle of Orleans was under the care of a Sulpician, Father Lamy. He had found it in a very sad state. The parishioners were almost devoid of faith and but little richer in morality. The young people especially were light and frivolous. The pastor sought a remedy for the spiritual miseries of his straying flock and finally determined that, if the girls were carefully educated, things would change for the better. It was an excellent field of labor for Margaret Bourgeoys' daughters. Father Lamy appealed to Mgr. de Saint-Vallier, who wrote to the Foundress. As we have already seen, Sister Anne and Sister Barbier were immediately named for the arduous task. "Before leaving for the Isle of Orleans," writes Sister Barbier, "I made a general confession as though I had been at the point of death."

Even had they cared to do so their poverty would not have allowed them to make elaborate preparations for the journey, a long and hard one in those primitive days. They took with them but one thin blanket and very little linen, yet the Indian summer was over and winter was near at hand. "We nearly froze to death," writes Sister Barbier, from whose *Memoirs* all these and subsequent details have been drawn. Other trials met them on their way. "We were laughed to scorn and humiliated in every way. Some asked us where were our beds and our belongings; others said we were dying of hunger at home,



and had been sent out to seek our fortune elsewhere.”

Arriving at the Isle of Orleans did not end their troubles. They had to lodge with a good widow whose house was filled with servants and children, and the nuns were, in consequence, subjected to many annoyances. “We suffered much during the first winter, and would have died of cold but for God’s special protection.” A still greater hardship was their distance from the church. In bad weather they often came home drenched, covered with icicles yet afraid to draw near the fire, surrounded as it ever was by the people of the house.

On one of these occasions, as they were returning from Mass, Sister Barbier was almost lost in the snow. The sharp north wind was scattering the light snowflakes and piling up chilly mounds by the roadside, when she slipped deep down into the ditch. “My companion,” she writes, “was far ahead, and I was worn out. I could not pull myself out from the ditch for I was growing weaker and the snow was covering me more thickly every moment. Then I asked the Infant Jesus to help me, if He willed to prolong my life for His glory and to give me more time for penance.” She was nearly buried out of sight, when some passers-by came to her rescue, leaving her however, stretched numb and stiff by the roadside. With great difficulty she made her painful way back to the house. Privation and exposure were followed by bodily infirmities, yet the unflinching patience and

joyous resignation of the two missionaries never faltered. They were ready to bear all for God and souls, nor did they suffer in vain. A change came over the parish. The young girls, at first inclined to scoff at the two nuns, were completely won over. A sodality was founded for the older ones. Its meetings were held before Mass, the nuns speaking to its members of faith and duty, then leading them to church in procession. Before very long, piety and virtue flourished in the Island. Some of the sodalists were led to yet higher things, and entered the Congregation to do for others what had been done for them.

That the Isle of Orleans was not the only place transformed by the labors of the Congregation nuns, may be seen in contemporary writings. In 1683, de Meulles writes to Seignelay: "You cannot imagine how much good has been done in Canada by the Sisters of the Congregation. Everywhere, they teach girls with the greatest care. If their work could be still further extended, they would do a world of good. This sort of life is truly admirable, better far than if the Community had been cloistered. They are most prudent, and can be sent everywhere, thus instructing girls who would otherwise remain in utter ignorance." Let us hear Mgr. de Saint-Vallier: "Besides the classes opened by the Congregation for the young girls of Montreal, and the boarding-school in which French and Indian girls are trained in piety, many excellent school teachers have come forth from the convent.

They have settled in various other parts of the colony where they teach children catechism and give useful and touching conferences to the older girls. There is not a good work which they have not successfully undertaken." "In forming the Institute so useful to the whole colony," writes Mother Juchereau in the *Annals of the Hotel-Dieu de Québec*, "Sister Bourgeoys and her companions have raised up one of the most flourishing communities in Canada, one whose perfume of holiness fills the country, and which does much good in the parishes where their missions are conducted with edifying care, fervor and regularity."

Meanwhile, the fame of the Congregation in different parishes reached the Bishop of Quebec, and he wished to have them in his own diocese. He had been specially impressed by the daughters of Providence, and asked to have a similar institution in Quebec. On the 13th of November, 1686, he bought a house with yard and garden as the initial step of the foundation. Sister Barbier was chosen Superior of the new house and Sister St. Ange was named to help her. God's blessing fell upon the good work and it prospered amazingly. Every day something was done to honor Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and so devotion to the Holy Family spread rapidly among the young girls of the town. In 1688 free schools were opened for the smaller girls. Then Mgr. de Saint Vallier sought to execute a project that appealed

powerfully to his charitable soul, the foundation of a home where the poor might be usefully employed. In 1689 he wrote to Mother Bourgeoys of the projected institution.

This led to perhaps the most touching incident of our heroine's later life. It was early spring and the warm breezes of April had partially thawed the ice-bound Canadian rivers. It was too early for navigation to be resumed, yet too late for any vehicle to venture upon the shifting ice. Mother Bourgeoys was sixty-nine years old, enfeebled by her arduous labors and many austerities. Yet, regardless of all this, she set out alone and on foot to travel 180 miles, all the way from Montreal to Quebec.\* We cannot even picture to ourselves what the hardships of the strange journey must have been — that aged woman now knee-deep in the soft snow, now dragging herself on hands and knees over the uncertain and treacherous ice, now wading through death-cold water. Her courage faltered not, and the journey's end was reached safely. On her arrival, she learned from the Bishop his desire to substitute the so-called "General Hospital" for the successful "Providence."

Though convinced that such a work lay beyond the sphere of her Community, Margaret's marvelous spirit of obedience forbade any remark or objection. She undertook the hardest work to favor

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\* We are told that her journeys in winter were always made on foot. In summer, she travelled by boat; these voyages gave her an opportunity for doing good to souls by word and example.

the Bishop's design, carrying heavy pieces of furniture from Lower Town to Upper. To those who know, from experience, the hills of Quebec, their length and steepness, this seems well-nigh incredible. Moreover, after devoting to this work the first four days of Holy Week, Mother Bourgeois spent the night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday on her knees, absorbed and motionless, before the Blessed Sacrament. Her Lord and Master then poured into her soul unspeakable graces and strength to undergo yet greater trials for His sake.

At the Mountain Mission in 1691 died the first Indian nun, Marie Barbe Attontinon. She was buried on the 29th of November in that part of the Ville-Marie church reserved for the burial of the Congregation nuns.

As years went by, it became more and more evident that God had chosen Margaret Bourgeois above all others to be the spiritual mother and chief teacher of the girls of Ville-Marie. We have seen how the nuns of Troyes sought in vain to cross the ocean. Later, the Ursulines made several attempts to gain a footing in Montreal, but by seemingly Providential interposition they achieved no more success than the Visitation nuns who later made a similar attempt. Hers and hers alone was to be the glorious mission of forming the wives, mothers and teachers of Ville-Marie, a colony chosen to preserve and spread the Catholic Faith in North America,

To fit her yet more fully for that mission, God led her through a fiery trial. As when a dark cloud, passing suddenly over the sun, changes the scene of radiant brightness to one of utter gloom, so, one day a shadow fell upon Mother Bourgeoys' soul. God's light seemed to shine no more in a mind now troubled and perplexed; the sweet unction of His grace no longer consoled the heart now heavy and well-nigh hopeless. Her very humility became a torment, for it made her feel worthy of God's most terrible chastisements. When a poor, deluded member of her Community came to give an account of some pretended vision in which she had been told that Mother Bourgeoys was nothing more than a reprobate, the latter was, at first, unmoved. But in January, 1690, when the same Sister Tardy reiterated her imaginary story of revelations concerning her superior, an awful terror seized Margaret's soul in its icy clutch. "For fifty months," she tells us, "I remained in this state of suffering which it is hard to depict." As far as we can see, the evil spirits were working to remove Mother Bourgeoys from a post in which she was doing more good than they could counteract. Their attempt was partially successful. Impelled by a conviction that she was unworthy to command, she urgently begged to be relieved of her responsibility as Superior. Her petition was finally granted. Sister Anne, who had helped to found the Mission at the Isle of Orleans, was finally

summoned to Montreal to succeed her. The newly elected Superior was then ill in Quebec, but it was hoped her health would be restored on her return to Ville-Marie. However, she had scarcely arrived there when on the 2nd of September, 1690, she went to her reward. In the light of past events this seemed a clear sign of God's will, and the idea of electing a new Superior was again relinquished.

Mgr. de Saint-Vallier, having visited the Congregation during the same month, Mother Bourgeoys gave him an account of all her trials and implored him to accept her resignation. The Bishop thought fit to reject her ardent prayer, and though inwardly crushed and desolate, she had to persevere in the discharge of her appointed duties, each year more manifold. However, Sister Tardy, and those who had encouraged her in her strange hallucination, having gone to tell their tale in France, were detained there. By his wisdom and firmness, Father Tronson restored peace to the troubled Communities of Ville-Marie.

We must now return to the Quebec foundations, and see how they fared after Mother Bourgeoys' return to Montreal. Sister Anne Hioux, afterwards chosen to be Superior in Margaret's place, had been called to Quebec from the Isle of Orleans, and Sister Barbier was sent to take her place. Thus were the Congregation nuns chosen by God to found the General Hospital, where so many destitute have been sheltered and cared for spiritually and temporally.

They directed it until 1692, when the Bishop resolved to confide it to cloistered nuns and named the Hospitalières de St. Joseph to replace them.

In removing the Congregation nuns from the Hospital the Bishop did not deprive Quebec of their services, but rather turned their undivided activity into a more congenial channel.

Mgr. de Saint-Vallier had given the Congregation nuns a house with the understanding that they might sell it if they wished. As this house was not suitable, they left it and bought another, into which they moved. But this change of abode led to many difficulties. The former proprietor of this second house claimed a legal right to seize it. Driven out of their new home, they found no better lodging than a miserable stable. "I rejoice," wrote Mother Bourgeoys, "I rejoice to hear that you are to dwell in a stable; but at the same time I am sorry to hear of the discontent evinced by certain persons of our acquaintance. For I have a great desire to remain in union with all, God having commanded us to love our neighbor. For this reason I was in no hurry to have the said contract registered." However, the Sulpicians bought a house for the Congregation nearer the Cathedral, in the Upper Town, where the Ursulines were already teaching. Mother Bourgeoys' charity was alarmed lest her daughters' proximity might prove an annoyance to the Ursulines. Besides, she felt there was much good to be



done among the poorer population of the Lower Town. She resolved to go herself to set things right. She reached Quebec on the 8th of May, 1692.

The house donated to them by the Bishop had been sold, but the owner of the Upper Town house insisted on being paid before the money due for the one they sold had been received. Delay exasperated him, and he brought suit against the nuns. Having heard that the plaintiff declared he should never forgive the Congregation, Margaret was sorely troubled. As she told her sisters later: "I want at all costs not merely to remain in charity with my neighbor, but to keep my neighbor in the charity he owes me. Ready to concede everything, I went to throw myself at the Blessed Virgin's feet in the Jesuit church. I could only repeat: 'Holy Virgin, I can do no more.' As I came out of the church, a person to whom I had never revealed our troubles, offered me a sum of money exactly equal to that demanded of us. Thus was this affair settled by the aid of Providence."

Besides the missions at Orleans and Quebec, Mother Bourgeois subsequently opened one at Château Richer, one at Lachine and another at Pointe-aux-Trembles. After Ville-Marie the two latter are the oldest parishes in the Island of Montreal.\* In each of these schools, two nuns were sent to teach. The good they did can never be adequately known or appreciated.

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\* Faillon. Vol. I. p. 341.

## CHAPTER XXI.

QUIET RESTORED — THE BURDEN LAID DOWN —  
SISTER BARBIER'S ELECTION — CHANGES AT THE  
MOUNTAIN MISSION — APPROBATION OF RULES —  
RENEWED EFFORTS OF MGR. DE ST. VALLIER —  
THE HOTEL-DIEU FIRE — THE DIVINE GUEST  
OF THE TABERNACLE — A TOUCHING PROCES-  
SION.

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WHEN the troubles alluded to in the last chapter had been ended and peace reigned once more, Margaret, for the fourth or fifth time, asked to give up her Superiorship. She was then seventy-three years old. At last, the Bishop consented. She thus tells the story of her resignation: "His Lordship, to whom three years earlier, I had given my reasons, asked me again why I desired to resign. I replied that perhaps God would give me a few years of life, and that I could then share with a new Superior all the knowledge gained from an experience of forty years and more. This met with his approval." Therefore, in September, 1693, the lowly Foundress laid down a burden that had weighed too heavily upon her shoulders and bowed her head beneath the authority

of one whom she herself had guided along the hidden way of perfection. The words she wrote on that occasion bear witness to her marvellous humility. "I must henceforth be spoken of as nothing more than a poor wretch who, having been unfaithful to the duty so lovingly confided to me, deserves great chastisements, all the greater because of the pain my tepidity has inflicted upon you. I request you to forgive me and to pray for me. Strive to repair the harm done as soon as possible. It is necessary to change superiors without delay."

Several days elapsed before the election took place. Margaret here showed the rule of conduct to be followed by a Superior during the interim between her resignation and the election of her successor. Mother Bourgeois' choice fell upon Sister Barbier. While in no way seeking to use undue compulsion, she allowed her desire to be known, and used her influence in favor of the devoted missionary. At Sister Barbier's election she tells us that "joy spread throughout the house," and great was her happiness at the fulfillment of her wishes. From Margaret's soul the shadows lifted at last, allowing God's sweet, consoling light to shine with all its peaceful radiance. She had drunk of the chalice of her Lord even to the bitter dregs, she had been drawn very near to the thorn-encircled Heart, and now, consolation flowed in.

In 1694, various changes occurred at the Mountain Mission. We have seen that it had been surrounded

with wooden palisades. One day, owing to the imprudence of a drunken Iroquois, a fire broke out that soon devoured not the palisades and the fort alone, but the village church as well. Father de Belmont, at his own expense, erected a stone fort of which there still remain relics in the shape of two old gray towers that stand as memorials of far-off and troublous times, amid the green trees of a great garden lying without the Grand Seminary. Of the two conical towers darkened by the snows and rains of centuries, one, we are told, was given to the nuns for a dwelling-place and the other for a school. Could those battered old walls but speak, they could tell many a touching tale, describe many a heart-stirring scene, paint for us the face and aspect, reproduce in their living tones the beautiful teachings, of her whose name and memory they so unendingly commemorate — our own dear Margaret Bourgeoys. But no; they stand, silent and gloomy, with round loop-holes, like eyes death-closed and sightless, filled with solid masonry. Generations of bright school-boys' faces, now mouldering in the grave or wrinkled by age, have looked up at them with curious eyes — their impassive stone has never yet yielded up the least of its secrets.

About the same time Gannensagouas came to the end of her long and wearing illness. She died a saintly death on the feast of St. Catherine, that

wise and gracious virgin-martyr, so confidently invoked in Our Lady's Congregation by both teachers and pupils. At first, her body was laid beneath the church; but some years later it was transferred to one of the above mentioned towers, now used as a chapel. There the following inscription may be read over her tomb:

“Here lie the mortal remains of  
Marie-Thérèse Gannensagouas  
of the  
Congrégation de Notre Dame.

Having labored thirteen years as school-teacher at the Mountain Mission, she died with a reputation for great sanctity, aged 28 years, on the 25th of November, 1695.”

It is now fully time to speak of one of our revered heroine's last and greatest labors — the obtaining of ecclesiastical approbation for her rules. Twenty years had gone by since Margaret's Community had been approved by royal letters, and twice that time had elapsed since her labors in Canada had first been undertaken — yet that Community still followed a merely temporary rule. It was, as we have already said, looked upon somewhat suspiciously because uncloistered — the novelty of its manner of life aroused strange prejudices in the people of that period. Besides Mgr. de Saint. Vallier, Bishop of Quebec, had one fixed idea, one favorite project:

the incorporation of the Ursuline and Congregation nuns into one community. Various reasons were alleged in favor of this step, but Mother Bourgeoys had an answer ready for each.

At length, Mgr. de Saint Vallier thought to gain his end by urging her to adopt the cloistered life and to exact from each novice a dower amounting to 2,000 francs. This would have resulted in the complete transformation of the Community. Old age had enfeebled Mother Bourgeoys, and she felt that her end could not be very far off. To leave her daughters in their present unsettled state might mean the destruction of her life-work. Would not her Community be either merged into that of the Ursulines, or at least, deprived, in great measure, of its spirit and of its aim? Pursued by this fear, she wrote to Father Tronson, asking him for a rule. He replied, in 1694: "I admire your Congregation so deeply, my dear Sister, that I shall willingly do whatever lies in my power to bring about what you desire for it. You are right to wish for permanent rules."

Mgr. de Saint Vallier made another vigorous attempt to achieve his purpose. He drew up a list of rules into which he introduced many of the practices observed by the Ursulines, hoping thus to bring Margaret's daughters by degrees, to a perfect assimilation of the former's spirit. This done, he went up to Montreal in May, 1694, determined to force his regulations upon the Congregation nuns. The

latter were pained and surprised at the many new and uncongenial practices imposed upon them, practices which would prove a great hindrance to the accomplishment of their special duties. However, they asked, with all due respect, for permission to confer among themselves upon the advisability of accepting the new items of the proposed rule. The submissive request provoked the Bishop, and he threatened to oblige them to submit without delay. Their pleading at length softened him, and he yielded so far as to promise to consult Father Tronson.

During a visit which he soon afterwards made to France, the Bishop spoke of the matter to the Superior of St. Sulpice, who, in turn, consulted the Director of the Seminary, then wrote to the Congregation nuns, asking them what displeased them most in the proposed rule. Sister Barbier, then Superior, Mother Bourgeoys, Sisters Charly, Lemoyne and Gariepy, her fellow-officers, wrote a collective letter setting forth their views upon the subject. They begged, especially, to be freed from the obligation of claiming a dower as they wished to receive not only rich girls, but all who felt the Divine call to labor in the Community. As we have already seen, they eloquently pleaded to continue their missionary toils in imitation of Our Lord's Apostles. Besides this, Mother Bourgeoys herself wrote to Father Tronson insisting on the exclusion of several points

of the new rule, which seemed opposed to the spirit of her Institute. This letter bears the date October 30, 1695.

An important event had occurred in February of the same year. For more than three years, the members of the Congregation had cherished the idea of building a chapel in which they could reserve the Blessed Sacrament. Until then, they had had but a small oratory near the nuns' rooms. This, they had considered too mean a dwelling-place for the Lord of Heaven and Earth. In 1692, with Dollier de Casson's approbation, Margaret decided to have a church built in the Convent grounds. Jeanne LeBer, whose wonderful story we shall tell later, gladly offered to share the expenses, while her brother, Pierre LeBer, promised to furnish all the stone required. The work began the following year, 1693, and in two years the church was completed. Even this, however, was not soon enough for the nuns who longed to have the Blessed Sacrament under their own roof. Towards the end of February, 1695, they began a novena, beseeching Our Lord to hasten the hour of His advent in their midst. Before its close, their prayer was answered in a way which almost made them regret the urgency that brought so swift and unexpected a reply.

During the night of the 24th of February, a lurid flame leaped up in the steeple of the Hotel-Dieu Church. Fiercely it blazed, until the pealing of



alarm-bells roused the towns-people and brought them, half-dressed, into the ruddily-illuminated streets. As the tumult of a terrified crowd filled the air, and the red signal of destruction spread over the sky, a panic seized on many hearts. Each man looked on the white face of his neighbor, ghastly in the fire's glare, and there read the same question: "Will the town be saved?" Then it was that Dollier de Casson, followed by the priests of the Seminary, came to the place of danger, bearing the Blessed Sacrament. A passionate prayer went up, "Lord, save us, have mercy on us!"

The wind vèered suddenly, and carried the roaring flame away from the town. At that manifestation of Divine clemency, a mighty shout of thanksgiving rent the air. But the maddened element had to find some fuel. A moment later, the hospital itself, was a mass of flames, and smoke. Père Deny, a Recollet, went fearlessly into the burning church, took out the Blessed Sacrament, and carried it, at first, to the house of a certain merchant named Arnaud. At dawn of day, the Congregation nuns gladly welcomed the Divine Guest, who was never more to leave them. As Sister Morin says, while grieving for their Sisters' misfortune, they could not but rejoice at seeing their prayer so promptly answered. Shortly afterwards, a priest sent by Dollier de Casson brought to the Congregation the thirty Hotel-Dieu nuns. Every kindness was lavished upon

them; sisterly sympathy and helpfulness did all that could be done to welcome them and make their sojourn happy. The sick inmates of the hospital, to the number of thirty-six, were housed at the Seminary until quarters could be prepared for them at the Congregation.

Three days later, a touching procession made its way to the Church of Bonsecours. Bereft of all earthly goods, the Hotel-Dieu nuns went to implore Our Lady's aid, and those of the Congregation accompanied them to plead their cause. Slowly, in silence and prayer, each Sœur Hospitalière, walking by the side of a Congregation nun, they passed along the streets of Ville-Marie, and together knelt at the Blessed Virgin's feet.

During nine months the two communities dwelt under one roof, united by bonds of friendship that long years have failed to sever, each going about its own duties, and striving by different means to attain the self-same end. Thus they have proved faithful to the agreement here transcribed: "Spiritual union with the Nuns of the Hotel-Dieu before they left the Congregation to return to the Hospital. True to our intention of keeping the Commandments which God in His mercy has given us from the creation of the World, of which this is the first: 'Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, with all thy strength,' we implore the Divine and Infinite Majesty to increase our love.

We protest that we have and will have body and soul, memory and will only to use them for the accomplishment of His Holy Will in time and eternity. The second commandment is like to this: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;' later on, God said by his Apostle that we should 'love one another, being one body in Christ and every one members of another.' (Rom. XII. 5). To obey this second, commandment, we, Sisters of the Congregation and of the Hotel-Dieu, being by a special Providence, together under one roof, desire to form a spiritual alliance, thereby to draw down God's blessing upon the works of the communities His mercy has confided to us for the relief of the sick and the instruction of girls.

Relying on the divine goodness, we wish to form but one heart and one soul, jointly participating in the good it may please God to do through us. By this same grace, we hope to keep far from us all that could, however slightly, disturb our union; bearing with each other in all difficulties we may meet with, whatever may arise to interrupt this union. We therefore implore the Blessed Virgin's aid that she may be our Protectress, and obtain for us the grace to be faithful until death. Amen."

## CHAPTER XXII.

JEANNE LEBER — CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH — GAIN  
FROM LOSS — A SECOND CATHERINE OF SIENNA —  
TWO GLIMPSES OF THE RECLUSE — JEANNE AND  
THE CONGREGATION — WORK AND PRAYER — A  
DANGER AVERTED — JEANNE LEBER AND MAR-  
GARET BOURGEOYS — FROM A CELL TO PARADISE.

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**A**LIFE of Margaret Bourgeoys would be sadly incomplete without a sketch of one who received from her so much spiritual aid and gave in return such generous assistance. Rarely, if ever, has any town possessed at once so many grand and saintly souls as those that flourished in the pure atmosphere of Ville-Marie during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Many familiar faces have already passed before us — our own noble heroine, knightly de Maisonneuve, devoted Jeanne Mance, gallant Dollard, the fervent converts of the Mountain Mission — but there is still another saintly life that claims our wondering admiration.

On the 4th of January, 1662, a child was born to Jacques LeBer, one of the wealthiest merchants and most upright Christians of Ville-Marie. The



JEANNE LEBER, RECLUSE.  
BORN AT VILLE-MARIE JAN. 4, 1662; DIED OCT. 3, 1714.



child was blessed not in her parents only, but in her sponsors as well, for de Maisonneuve was chosen to be her godfather and Jeanne Mance her god-mother. When baptized in the parish church by Father Gabriel Souart, she was called Jeanne, thus bearing her own mother Jeanne Lemoyne's name, as well as that of the foundress of the Hotel-Dieu.

All that a Christian mother could do to foster purity and holiness in her child was done by Madame LeBer, and her efforts were not fruitless. With the first dawn of reason, the little one turned to God. Each day, even as a mere child, she was brought to see the Hotel-Dieu nuns, and astonished them by her eagerness to learn about Our Lord, and especially about the mysteries of the Holy Childhood. Like the other children of Ville-Marie she became a pupil in Mother Bourgeoys' school, and then first formed her deep attachment for the Congregation of Our Lady. Jeanne was eight years old when Margaret Bourgeoys went to France to seek letters-patent. For two years the colony was deprived of her presence, and it was during this interval that Madame LeBer decided to part from her little daughter, placing her with the Ursulines of Quebec.

As a pupil, she was remarkable for her submission to her teachers, her gentleness to her companions, her constant self-denial and an almost excessive

horror of vanity and ostentation. Pleasing in appearance, winning in manner, quick of apprehension, skilful in needlework, she was withal modest and retiring, anxious to hide from others all that could win their praise, and loving to be alone with God. She had a special devotion to Our Lady, and, was eager to show it in every way, feeling, she said, that such devotion should be the peculiar characteristic of all the inhabitants of Ville-Marie, Mary's especial kingdom. After the Blessed Virgin, she loved and invoked the Holy Angels, in particular, St. Michael and her Guardian Angel, to whom she turned for aid in every difficulty.

In 1677, her education being completed, she returned to her father's house in Ville-Marie, only to continue there her convent life with its regular, prayerful habits. She rose early, went to the first Mass, and never failed to make her daily meditation, spiritual reading and visit to the Blessed Sacrament. The time not given to prayer was given to work. Respect for her parents' wishes obliged her to wear pretty and costly dresses. But far from caring for them, she never put them on without hiding under the soft fabrics some painful instrument of penance. Though so unpityingly stern to self, to others her manner was ever gracious and her sweet gravity could change in season to brightness and gayety. Her best friends were the Hotel-Dieu and Congregation nuns, whom she saw



frequently. The very name "Congregation of Our Lady" attracted her like a magnet, and the beautiful selfless lives of the religious filled her with admiration.

One especially, a soul still endowed with all youth's ardor and charm drew her by that sweetly irresistible attraction, that mysterious sympathy, placed by their Creator in kindred hearts; binding them so closely, that death itself, far from severing the interwoven cords, gives to the fruit of a brief moment's intercourse the duration of eternity. Next to Margaret Bourgeois herself, this nun, Marie Charly by name, became Jeanne LeBer's closest friend. They loved to speak together of God and heaven, and found in their mutual affection a new motive and a powerful incentive to love and serve their Divine Master. Such intercourse is sometimes too sweet for earth. Its withdrawal was to mark one of the decisive moments of Jeanne's life.

Worn out before the time by labor, austerity, and burning aspirations, the young religious was stricken down by a fatal illness. Obedience, patience, gentleness, angelic joy shed their radiance around her dying hour. In the depths of her broken yet submissive heart Jeanne secretly resolved to give herself at once and forever to that Spouse whose welcoming love already lighted up the wan face of her beloved friend.

Scarcely had the lifeless body of that friend been

laid to rest in the lowly grave of a Congregation nun, when Jeanne made a vow of chastity. She was allowed to take it for five years only. With her parents' consent, she then entered on a life so extraordinary that we require a strong faith in the wonderful mysteries of grace not only to admire, but even to forbear condemning, its seeming rigor. With the permission of her confessor, she macerated her body with cruel disciplines, wore a hair shirt or belt, rose at half past four, spent her days in prayer, needlework and meditation, quitting her cell only to go to Mass and visit the Blessed Sacrament. At midnight she rose to spend an hour in prayer.

Two years after Jeanne's reclusion, Madame LeBer fell ill and died on the 8th of November, 1682. All through her mother's illness Jeanne quitted not her cell. Let us not hastily accuse her of hardness or indifference—God alone could reveal to us the struggle that went on in her heart and the pangs that rent it, for, as we have seen, hers was not a cold or unfeeling nature. When Madame LeBer lay stiff and cold in death, her daughter came silently into the chamber of sorrow, knelt by the motionless form, took the icy hand and covered it with her kisses and her tears. Silently still, she returned to her cell, and poured forth her prayers before the Lord, the sole witness of her secret anguish.

Ten years went by, and she was seen but once. Her gallant young soldier-brother, Jean LeBer du

Chesne, had been wounded in battle at *Prairie de la Madeleine*, and was brought home to die. After his death Margaret Bourgeoys and Sister Barbier came, as was their wont, to comfort the living and prepare the dead for burial. Then only, Jeanne came forth from her cell, gave them in silence whatever they needed for their charitable work, knelt in prayer by her brother's body, and went back to her solitude without uttering a word or betraying her grief by any outward sign.

Soon after, as we saw in the last chapter, the Congregation nuns decided to build a church. Jeanne LeBer promised to give the required funds, if she were received as one of the sisterhood and allowed a cell behind the altar. Her proposals were joyfully accepted. She wished the church to be, as far as possible, a reproduction of the Holy House of Nazareth, oblong in shape, with the altar placed in the most spacious part, between the doors opening right or left. Her apartment, behind the altar, was to be about ten or twelve feet in depth, consisting of three stories. The first was to be a vestry, the second and third reserved for her use. Only a thin partition separated her own room from the Blessed Sacrament, and her bed was placed in line with the Tabernacle.

On the 5th of August was celebrated the ceremony of her reclusion. Prior to this act, the agreement between Jeanne LeBer and the Congregation

was drawn up by a notary named Bosset, and may still be seen in the Prothonotary's office in Montreal. It is signed by Sister Barbier, by several other Congregation nuns, and by Dollier de Casson.

The feast of Our Lady of the Snows fell on a Friday, that 5th of August, 1695. Solemn vespers were chanted in the Parish Church after which a procession was formed, headed by the clergy. It made its way to M. LeBer's house, where Jeanne was absorbed in prayer. She wore a woollen gown of light grey, confined to the waist by a black belt. Quitting forever the home of her childhood, breaking asunder the last and closest ties that bound her to earth, she followed the clergy, accompanied by her father and several other relatives. It was a striking scene. Along the crowded street they passed: the recluse, clad in penitential garb, with downcast eyes, quiet bearing and firm step; and the white-haired man, bowed down by age and sorrow, who seemed like Abraham or Jephtha, to be leading the victim to sacrifice. Scarce had the procession reached the church before Jacques LeBer, no longer master of his anguish, turned back, and went to hide his grief in the now deserted home.

Dollier de Casson blessed the cell, and as she knelt before him, exhorted Jeanne LeBer to persevere therein, like Magdalen in the grotto. He then led her to the threshold, and she passed calmly into her new abode, closing and fastening the door while

the choir chanted the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

The following morning, feast of the Transfiguration, Dollier de Casson celebrated Mass for the first time in the Congregation church. Among the faithful knelt M. LeBer, strong in his heroic resignation.

Then began a hidden life that was a perpetual homage to Jesus in the Eucharist. Jeanne's days, as of old, were devoted to various exercises, each of which was faithfully performed at its appointed time. From three to five hours were daily given to mental prayer; Holy Communion, she received four times a week; she rose at four from Easter to All Saints, and half an hour later the rest of the year. Between her spiritual duties she worked for herself and for the poor, or embroidered beautiful and costly vestments, some of which are carefully treasured at Notre Dame church and at the Mother House of the Congregation. The nuns were allowed to seek her advice in their spiritual difficulties, and she always answered them with unfailing wisdom and gentleness. The most awful part of this death-like existence is that for twenty years she was deprived of spiritual consolations, and followed her rule from item to item with darkened mind and desolate heart.

She had been living thus for several years, when Jacques LeBer's last illness began. Faithful to her reclusion, she sought only in spirit the bedside of her beloved father, and only in spirit did she take

leave of him forever. She prayed for him ardently, and strength was given her to make this her last and greatest sacrifice.

Each night, as formerly, she rose to watch before her Lord; and as the nuns were then asleep, she would pass into the dim chapel, and lie prostrate on the altar step in seraphic prayer. Her every act was made in union with Our Lady, with whose dispositions and intentions Jeanne sought to identify her own.

In 1711 the English threatened to invade Canada. A great army marched on Ville-Marie by land, while a strong fleet sailed for Quebec. Montreal was panic-stricken. Anne Baroy, Jeanne LeBer's cousin, and attendant, brought her the awful tidings, and told of the towns-people's terror. The recluse listened, reflected for a moment, then said in a tone of deep conviction: "Fear nothing, Our Lady will guard the country."

Then she gave her a picture of the Blessed Virgin on which she had written the following prayer, still daily recited in every Congregation chapel of North America:

"Queen of Angels, our Sovereign Lady and our very dear Mother, we, thy daughters, confide to thy care all our houses and all our possessions. We trust thou wilt not suffer thy enemies to molest us, for we are under thy protection, and we place unbounded confidence in thee. Amen."

This, Sister LeBer bade her cousin fasten to the barn-door. Numberless citizens came to beg for copies of the same prayer, their trust in Jeanne's intercession being unlimited.

The Baron de Longueuil, at that time Governor of Montreal, was setting forth to surprise the English at Chambly. His trust was in the Blessed Virgin's aid, and as a certain pledge of victory he decided to carry a banner bearing Our Lady's image on one side and a prayer written by Sister LeBer on the other.

Jeanne herself made the banner. On one side was a picture of the Immaculate Conception, painted by her brother, and on the opposite side was traced the following inscription: "Our enemies rely on the power of their arms, and we on the powerful intercession of her whom we revere and invoke as the Queen of Angels. She is as terrible as an army in battle array. She will help us to vanquish our enemies." Father de Belmont publicly blessed the banner and solemnly placed it in the Baron's loyal hands.

Anne Barroy, while giving news of the great event, said to Sister LeBer: "If the English have a favorable wind, their fleet will be at Quebec on such a date, and the fate of the colony will be sealed." After a brief silence, the recluse made reply: "Sister, your fears will not be realized, the Blessed Virgin

will watch over this country. She is our guardian — why should any danger appall us?”

Subsequent events verified her prediction, and the manner of the enemy's humiliation was clearly an answer to prayer, in particular to that of one who might be considered an intercessory victim for the entire colony. A sudden and violent south wind sprang up as the English ships neared Quebec, and seven of the largest vessels were dashed to pieces on the rocks hard by Isle aux Oeufs. The efforts of valiant defenders were unnecessary. Heaven took the battle into its own hands, and its artillery shook and roared and blazed away over the black waters into which English ships and English soldiers were sinking to their awful doom. “And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword, hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.”

The land forces that had set out for Montreal turned back in dismay on hearing of the terrific catastrophe from which two sailors only escaped to tell the tale; for Admiral Walker, lacking fortitude to endure disgrace, had fired the shattered remnants of his once powerful fleet.

These historical details have led us away from what is of greater interest to us: Sister LeBer's connection with the *Congrégation de Notre Dame*. She admired Mother Bourgeoys most deeply and never wearied of praising her virtues. Whenever the Sisters came to consult her, she held up the example



of their Foundress as the surest model of fidelity to all that is required of a true Congregation nun. Mother Bourgeoys' opinion of Jeanne may be gathered from her writings. In one place she says: "I was delighted when Miss LeBer entered our house to imitate Magdalen's retirement. She never quits her cell, and seldom speaks to any one. Her food is conveyed to her through a small aperture. A little grating allows her to see the Tabernacle and receive Holy Communion." Referring to the presence of the Hotel-Dieu nuns in 1695, Margaret writes elsewhere: "Since Miss LeBer has entered here to dwell in retirement, I have seen the three classes of women left by Our Divine Lord to minister to the wants of His Church. . . . These three orders are now united under one roof; Miss LeBer having been called to represent Magdalen, who dwelt in a grotto as St. John the Baptist had dwelt in the wilderness. The Hospital nuns have been here some time and remind us of Martha's busy though cloistered life. The nuns of the *Congrégation de Notre Dame* represent the Blessed Virgin, their Mother, Superioress and Foundress. She alone embraces all the different callings of the Church and protects all religious orders. This Holy Mother is pleased to unite the three classes of women within her house to teach us that a bond of universal charity should join us to all who are devoted to God's service under her holy protection."

To prove her affection for Our Lady's Congregation, Sister LeBer was not content to offer for it all her prayers and penances, she also gave over to it large sums of money to help in the education of poor children. At her death she bequeathed to it her whole fortune. One large amount she gave specially for the foundation of the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Congregation chapel. Thus Jesus in the Eucharist would never be quite alone—one nun would ever be at His feet to represent all her sisters. This practice has been faithfully observed down to this day.

One night, in 1714, while making her nightly vigil before the altar Jeanne LeBer contracted a severe cold, which soon developed into pleurisy. For the first time since her reclusion, sheets and a mattress were placed on her miserable bed. Weak and suffering, but never uttering a complaint or a request, she lay, with serene countenance waiting for death. Ever thoughtful of the Eucharistic Lord who was, as she had said, the magnet that had drawn her to her cell and kept her there, she daily sent a nun to take her place before Him. On the third of October, she joyously expired, the bliss of Heaven already shining upon her face.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RULE AGAIN—MGR. DE ST. VALLIER YIELDS AT LAST — THE FIRST PROFESSION—SOEUR DU SAINT-SACREMENT — ELECTIONS — “NOW, O LORD, DISMISS THY SERVANT” — A FINAL ACT OF HUMILITY — “HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD.”

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THE story of the Hotel-Dieu fire and Jeanne LeBer's reclusion has interrupted the account of various events relating to the approbation of Mother Bourgeoys' rule. The aged Foundress, having written to Father Tronson, received the following answer in 1696: “My dear Sister, your two letters written last year, have revealed to me the guiding care of Providence over you and the grace Our Lord has given you in choosing you to found the Congregation of Our Lady. We cannot fail to admire this institute, which edifies men and glorifies God. We have learned its fruits and the blessing God has bestowed upon it, through the information we yearly receive. Therefore, we shall be happy to seize every opportunity to increase its fervor and ever preserve in it the same spirit.

“I gladly spoke to His Lordship about the Rule he has prescribed. I explained your objections which

seemed very reasonable, and I think he will consider them. At least he admits that he did not want to oblige you to make solemn vows, since that would completely alter your institute; and if you are not satisfied on every other point as well, the fault will not be mine. ”

Mgr. de Saint Vallier yielded at last. He revised the rule he had at first suggested, arranging it in accordance with the Foundress' views and desires, at least as regards essentials. And, although there remained a few articles that were not altogether suitable, the rule, nevertheless, was solemnly accepted and signed by the whole Community on the 24th of June, 1698. These are the terms of the agreement: “We do accept, with all respect and submission, the rules given to us by His Lordship of Quebec; and, after having read and examined them several times, we are convinced they will contribute to the good of our community and we are resolved to practise them with all possible fidelity. In proof of which, we have duly signed, at Montreal, the 24th of June, 1698.”

This act bears the signatures of Sister Barbier, Superior; Sister St. Ange, Assistant; Margaret Lemoyne, Novice Mistress; Margaret Bourgeoys and twenty-five other members of the Community.

The next day the nuns pronounced their vows in accordance with the new regulations. Mgr. de Saint Vallier, accompanied by Dollier de Casson, and

M. Glandelet, Vicars-Generals, by M. M. de Valens, Geoffrey, Meriel, Priat, and Villemola, priests of St. Sulpice, assisted at the impressive ceremony. On that midsummer day, more than two hundred years ago, took place the first and most solemn of the long chain of religious professions celebrated at the Congrégation de Notre Dame. Those who listened to Mgr. de Saint Vallier's exhortations and made their vows in his presence were the forerunners of the almost innumerable daughters of Margaret Bourgeoys who have since made the same vows, worn the same costume, and undertaken the same noble work. As the buds of Spring unfailingly come forth to replace the withered leaves of Autumn, so, as age and death rob each class-room of its devoted teacher, another comes gladly forward to take her place — and still the great work goes on, just as Mother Bourgeoys had dreamed and planned, prayed and labored that it might be done. Only the Angels, if God allowed even *their* keen eyes to pierce the mists of futurity, as they hung in breathless adoration over the altar of sacrifice, or bowed down before each living tabernacle, saw the full scope and meaning of that first profession. After the eloquent sermon the nuns, to the number of twenty-five, knelt at the altar-rail, and one by one, while the Bishop stood before them uplifting the consecrated Host, slowly uttered the vows that made them the chosen spouses of Christ. Each then

received the name by which she was to be known. Margaret, because of her tender devotion to the Holy Eucharist, chose that of Sœur du Saint-Sacrement, and Sister Barbier became Sœur de L'Assomption.

As the rule, besides simple vows, mentions perpetual vows, to be made some time after profession, Mgr. de Saint Vallier decreed that eight days after the first ceremony a similar one should be celebrated. During the interval, like the Apostles awaiting in prayer and recollection the coming of the Holy Ghost, the nuns made a solemn retreat, during which they elected the officers who were to direct the Community for a period of six years. Sœur Marguerite Lemoyne, now known as Sœur du Saint-Esprit, was named Superior; Sœur de L'Assomption, Assistant; Sœur Catherine Charly, afterwards Catherine du Saint-Sacrement, Mistress of Novices; the other appointments remaining as before.

On the first of July, the nuns passed once more from the community to the chapel, chanting that most beautiful of psalms "*Lætatus sum*," which awoke in their souls an even deeper thrill of joy than it does in ours, since their feet were already standing in the ante-chamber of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

The Bishop preached, said Mass and received the nuns' vows as on a former occasion, save that those vows, instead of being temporary, were now made for life.

Like the aged Simeon, Margaret Bourgeoys, could now chant her *Nunc Dimittis* — the work God had given her to perform was at last achieved and she had given to the church another religious order; she had prepared a great army of laborers to gather in the harvests of her Lord. The trials, interior struggles and painful uncertainty of her youth, the labors, sufferings and privations of her maturity, the spiritual desolation of her old age — how little and trifling they seemed in comparison with the great joy that flooded her soul, as bowing low before the tabernacle she could breathe forth her “*Consummatum est!*” Truly might she say, “My task is done; my mission is accomplished, Blessed be Thy Holy Name, who hast upheld and guided me from the dawn of my youth even unto the sunset of my years.”

When she rose from her long thanksgiving, it was to humble herself more perfectly before all. In the presence of the assembled Community she knelt at the Bishop's feet, and urgently craved, as a much desired grace, that she might spend the rest of her life in holy obedience and be forever excluded from any post of authority. Deeply touched, Mgr. de Saint Vallier granted the humble request on one condition: she must, as long as she lived, take an active interest in the Community's elections.

During Mgr. de Saint Vallier's stay in Montreal the Congregation asked and received several spiritual

privileges. The first was the permission to celebrate, each year, the feast of the Visitation by having High Mass, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament all the day through, and to have solemn Benediction on the seven principal feasts of Our Lady.

The Bishop's next act was to make the nuns in the different Missions sharers in their sister's happiness. He returned to Quebec, taking with him a copy of the various acts signed by the sisterhood at Ville-Marie. On the fourth of August, the nuns from Orleans, Château Richer and Quebec, were convoked and duly accepted the new Rule. The next day they pronounced their vows in the chapel of the Seminary.

Mother Bourgeoys tells us that during four years, probably until 1697, she lived almost constantly in the infirmary. Age, suffering and toil had enfeebled her frame, so her daughters strove to spare her any fatigue or responsibility. With Sœur Crolo, who could no longer follow the regular exercises of the Community, she spent her days in solitude, prayer and needlework. "I slept and took my meals there with Sister Crolo . . . and rarely went to church, for Mass was then said in the house. I did not go out, nor speak to any of the sisters . . . all this, as I was told, because of my great age."

The time for doing heroic deeds and achieving brilliant actions was past, and she who had awakened such admiration by her energy and ability, was now



to give a no less wonderful example of the hidden virtues of private life. Apart from the dispensations forced upon her by her superiors, she followed the rule in its minutest details with wonderful fidelity. Her every thought, affection and desire centred in God, she gave day by day the most beautiful example of sincere humility and self-forgetful charity. All she had done for God was in her own eyes less than nothing, and she considered herself the most unworthy of the Community. She was always happy to help others, and the most humiliating labors were those she loved to perform.

Thus the years sped by, and she in whose heart had been conceived the first idea of Our Lady's Congregation, she who had given it life and being, who had brought it safely out of every trial into its full strength and activity, now lived under its roof as the lowliest and most obedient of all its members.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAST ACHIEVEMENT — A SPIRITUAL LEGACY—  
MARGARET'S SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL — OUR LADY  
THE PERFECT EXEMPLAR — MARGARET'S TEACH-  
INGS THE TRANSCRIPT OF HER OWN LIFE —A  
MOTHER'S PRAYER.

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**F**AITHFUL to the divine guidance, Margaret Bourgeoys had completed her life-work, and on going to her Master, she would leave others behind to continue it from generation to generation. But she thought she had still another duty to perform. As she drew nearer to God, He appeared to her ever more and more worthy of love, and all the devotion of her heart seemed unworthy of Him. The slightest infidelity to His grace was, in her eyes, a grievous offence. Her own austerities never relaxed, but, as her Community developed, some modifications had to be introduced into its original mode of existence. These were imposed by legitimate authority because few constitutions could bear the double burden of constant work and great austerity. Yet, though each change was reasonable and necessary, each was an added anxiety and a new pain for Mother Bourgeoys.

“For a long time,” she tells us, “it had seemed to me that God required greater perfection of this community. During the night from the third to the fourth of July, 1697, my soul was importuned by an urgent thought. I was impressed with the conviction that I was to be the Jonah of our Lady’s Congregation, to warn this house of its infidelities at the risk of being cast into the sea. Being powerfully urged, I offered myself with my whole heart to do God’s Will, and was relieved and satisfied. I was then content with the resolve to seek advice as to what I should do. But the fifth of October, at night, the same thought returned with all its original intensity. I determined to do what I could to be faithful to grace. I revealed the facts to Father Caille, our Superior, and to Father de Valens. They bade me speak to our own Superioress. . . . Some days later, fearful of proving unfaithful, I resolved with their advice to set down in writing whatever seemed necessary. I have therefore taken up my pen, in the hope that if I do my best, God in His mercy, will deliver me from the chastisement deserved by my infidelity, whereas I had so often promised to do His Will at the first sign vouchsafed me.”

Then follows the narrative in a style clear, strong and simple, of the graces received during her childhood, of her vocation and its trials, her arrival in Canada, her labors there, her various journeys to

France and their results. Thus, at the age of seventy-eight, while seeking solely to glorify God, she wrote the story of her own life with its marvels of faithful correspondence to grace. What an undertaking for one so old, and so broken by toil and penance! Even the mere manual labor required might well arouse our wondering admiration, but how much more the strength and lucidity of a mind that could apply itself to such a task and accomplish it so well! It was not merely to be a grateful record of God's gifts, but also a sort of spiritual testament for her daughters' guidance and for that of the souls confided to their care. Wonderful privileges had been conferred that she might lead souls to holiness. Margaret now set forth the pure ideal of that holiness and the rules by which it might be attained. Thus when her body would be cold in death and her soul rejoicing before God's throne, the spirit of her sanctity would survive in those who would drink deep of the wisdom stored up in her writings. And what was that spirit if her maxims are to be considered a faithful transcript of it? Purely and solely the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—of humility, obedience, mortification, charity and zeal for souls. Expressed in clear and direct language, bearing the stamp of sound sense and breathing the most tender devotion to Our Lady, these writings are still treasured and consulted by the members of her Community. So

are her teachings kept alive from year to year, moulding and guiding those who call her, with reverent love, their Foundress and their Mother.

Wise and prudent, yet full of tenderness and piety, these maxims of Ven. Mother Bourgeoys would be well worth quoting in their entirety; it is indeed hard to choose out of that treasury what best gives us an idea of the whole.

The very soul of her Community, its distinctive and characteristic virtue, was to be charity, as it had been from childhood the guiding principle of her own life. In the practice of that highest form of charity,—zeal for souls,—Our Lady was to be ever its model, in union with whom all its works were to be performed and all its intentions supernaturalized. She dwells on the necessity of joining purity of intention with prompt outward obedience to rule. Of her favorite virtue she speaks these beautiful words: “Our Lady’s charity is like a limpid stream that has its source in the Eternal Fountains, quenches the thirst of all, can never be drained, and ever flows back to its Source. It is therefore by Mary that we should go to God, as it was by her that the Eternal Father has given us His Son. Now, we go to Mary by observing, as far as our weakness permits, the great precept of charity as she herself observed it. \* To imitate the Blessed Virgin, it is necessary that above all else, we observe the double commandment

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\* *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, 1818, p. 235

of charity to God and to our neighbor. It must fill the first place, it must be the beginning, the progress and the end of our actions. We must observe it in all things, faithfully and joyously, striving to make it clearly understood in the community and in the schools. Like the Jews of old, but in a more spiritual sense, we must wear it written on our brow, in our hands, on our dress, in our houses, and on the threshold of our doors, being assured that if fidelity to this law leads to life, transgression of it leads inevitably to perdition." \*

About a year before her death, she wrote to a confidential friend: "My most ardent desire has ever been, and still is, that the great precept of love of God above all and love of our neighbor for God's sake, may be imprinted in all hearts. Ah! could I but engrave it on my own and on those of my sisters, it would be the fulfilment of all my desires. I wish that this supreme subject be made prominent in the instructions given at the Community and in the missions." Nor can we forbear quoting a most beautiful comparison, in which both thought and figure are alike admirable: "To reach this love of union with God we must cleanse our souls by perfect contrition. The Sanctuary Lamp gives a clear idea of this union. When the oil is clarified and the wick well prepared, the flame draws the oil even to the last drop. The oil is a figure of the soul; the

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\* *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, 1818, p. 235.

wick of the body, there remaining a small residue of ashes to mark the resurrection at the end of the world, and the flame is a figure of the Holy Spirit. If the oil be not clean, it will give no light. If the wick be soiled the flame finds no means of drawing up the oil. In like manner, the fire of the Holy Ghost, not finding our souls prepared nor our bodies purified, cannot enkindle in them His Divine Love, that unitive love for God of which I have spoken."

Her words in praise of humility are not less eloquent. In her eyes it was a fault to murmur at an unjust reproach, to receive an insult reluctantly or to shrink from a humiliating task. She often repeats: "To remain humble, it were well for us to reflect often on the greatness and on the humiliations of the Blessed Virgin. Her privileges and her virtues raised her above all other creatures, and far from preferring herself to anyone, she considered herself the very least. We are therefore very blind and very guilty when we dare to prefer ourselves to another or to glory in our poor talents, whether strength or skill, wit or science, for our self-conceit often deceives us, and we are anything but what we deem ourselves to be. Even had God given us rare talents, from Him alone have we received them. We are only the more bound to recognize His bounty and to humble ourselves, both on account of our pride and of our failure to profit by these gifts. For we must still be convinced that often those

least pleasing exteriorly are interiorly most agreeable to God, and that moreover, to punish our self-exultation, and self-love, He often withdraws altogether advantages which served but to feed our inordinate vanity." \*

Mortification is one of the virtues she urges most strongly. After referring to the inevitable modifications gradually introduced into the primitive observances of the order, she says: "They tell me that I must care for my health, have a comfortable bed and good food, endeavoring thus to ward off sickness and infirmities. At the same time I hear another voice, more powerful and more ancient; it speaks to me through the pages of approved books or the words and teachings of Our Lord as well as through my own experience. "Why should I distrust Providence, which has so happily guided me for more than fifty years? For by its aspirations did I begin, not an austere life in the desert, but a life lowly and simple, suitable to the condition of a poor girl."

God's wisdom is made manifest in the trials of His servant. While Mother Bourgeoys accepted for others a necessary change, her own life was to be a perfect model of fervor and mortification, silently preaching the necessity of self-denial and detachment from all earthly things. Her light was to

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\**Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, 1818, p. 225.



shine out, clear and unwavering before her daughters' eyes, guiding them surely along the Way of the Cross. And what to her was a great sorrow, became to others a great advantage, since she was led to pour out her soul in writings which else had never come down to us with their beautiful message of divine charity.

One by one, she thus takes up the virtues and duties of the religious life, sets them forth in all their beauty, gives clear rules for fidelity therein, and never for one moment loses sight of the life and example of the Blessed Virgin. To Mother Bourgeois' influence may be ascribed not only the wonderful work done by her daughters for the sanctification of Christian homes in crowded town or lonely country, but also the wide-spread and fervent devotion to Our Lady which has always existed throughout Canada. She left that devotion in its fulness to her own daughters and like the rare ability in preparing children for the sacraments which is the recognized special gift of the Sisters of the Congregation, the legacy has been faithfully cherished. In token of Mary's reign over the Congregation, and of its claim to be her very own, Margaret ordained that everything belonging to it, houses, doors, furniture, etc., should be marked with Our Lady's monogram. When criticised for not giving to her daughters the safeguard of a cloister, she seized the opportunity to pay a wonderful tribute

to the power of Mary's protection: "True it is that the cloister is a protection for women; but could we find a more potent guardian than the mother to whom the Eternal Father confided the Sacred Humanity of the Eternal Word?"

One thing must be borne in mind, while considering Mother Bourgeoys' counsels and maxims. However perfect in form and expression, they are not mere productions of her gifted intellect, but verily a transcript of her own virtues. What she so urgently recommends to others, she first practised with wonderful perfection. The humility, charity, mortification, zeal, devotion to Our Lady and all the other virtues of which she treats shone first and brightest within her own soul. The truth of this assertion needs not to be lengthily proved—a backward glance at her life and her actions suffices to demonstrate it.

Before closing this chapter, let us hear Margaret's prayer for those to whom she addressed her parting exhortations: "Most Holy Virgin, my sweet mother, suffer not the enemy to boast that he hath made a breach in thy little company. Let me rather ask of thee, what Moses asked for the Jews: 'O Lord God, destroy not thy people and Thy inheritance. . . . Lest the people of the land say: The Lord brought them out, that He might kill them in the wilderness.' (Deut. IX. 26-28.) I acknowledge that I have done not ten actions, nay, not even one, as I ought. Yet if thou dost pray for one of

thy servants and for those to whom I have bound myself in thy service, thou wilt surely be heard. Do then in favor of thy daughters, what thou hast done for so many wretches. I implore for them that all may be numbered with the elect." Turning to God the Father, she asks the same grace for her community and all its benefactors and concludes with these words: "This request seems right and just. If it be rejected my lack of needed virtues will be the sole cause. Vouchsafe to give them to me by the love Thou bearest to men, Thou Who hast given Thy only Son to redeem us, and by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit which I humbly ask of Thee.

"O Holy Virgin, I unite my unworthy petitions to the love with which Thou dost readily obtain all things. My good Angel, join thy prayers to mine, that so we may all together praise the Author of our being in the blessedness of eternity. Amen." \*

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\* *Vie de la Sœur M. Bourgeois*, p. 77.

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE REWARD AT HAND — THE CROWNING SACRIFICE — IN ILLNESS AS IN HEALTH — LAST COUNSELS — THE HOUR DRAWS NEAR — GOD CLAIMS HIS OWN — A RAY OF GLORY.

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MARGARET had already overstepped the scriptural limit assigned to the life of man, after which it is, according to the Psalmist, nothing but misery and suffering. As she felt her hour approaching, her desire to behold and possess her God grew daily more ardent. In 1699 she was seized by a severe illness which seemed the certain forerunner of dissolution.

When the nuns saw their beloved Foundress going from them, their hearts were wrung with grief. Then better than ever before they appreciated the treasure which was theirs. Must they then lose forever her whose care over them had been so wisely solicitous, whose tender sympathy had been unfailing, whose holy example was their most powerful stimulus in the upward path, and whose voice knew so well how to counsel, comfort, and inflame? Under

the stress of their grief they turned to prayer as the only means of averting so sad a calamity.

Before long a marked improvement took place in Mother Bourgeoys' condition. She began to rally, though her daughters felt it could be only for a time. As she saw her strength returning, at least in part, Margaret gently reproved them for deferring in their love the hour for which she longed. Their tender ministrations and ardent prayers had indeed brought her back from the brink of the grave. For another year she continued to be their example and their comfort.

On the 31st of December, the household was weighed down by that heaviness of suspense which ever lies upon the home where death is hovering over some beloved form. Sister Catherine Charly, who, as Novice Mistress, was admirably fitted for the duties of her most important post, was entering the Valley of Shadows. Her painful illness had been gradually increasing and during the dark hours of the night a sudden and violent paroxysm warned the watchers that the end was near. Instantly startled and anguish-stricken, leaving one of their number to attend to the patient, they hurried through the silent house, to warn the Community. Each Sister was summoned to pray for the departing soul and to witness the solemn yet comforting spectacle of a death precious in the sight of God.

One of the messengers knocked at Mother

Bourgeoys' door and coming to her bed-side, warned her of Sister Charly's approaching end. Margaret breathed a long, deep sigh. Then, clasping her thin and toil-worn hands in a pleading gesture, she raised her dim but still beautiful dark eyes, and uttered this prayer: "Lord, why dost Thou not take me who am so useless, rather than this poor Sister who could still do so much for Thee?" Beautiful prayer! Love of God for whom she pined, love of her Community which she could not bear to see deprived of a useful member, love of her suffering sister, whom she yearned to restore to health and strength — all these lent ardor to the supplications of one who considered her life of less value than that of the least of the other nuns.

The victim has been offered, the sacrifice is accepted. Margaret's life of unselfishness could not be more fitly closed than by the sublimest sacrifice one human being can make for another. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John XV. 13.) At that very moment, Sister Charly grew calmer, her strength returned by degrees, and before many hours all danger was past.

The next day's sun had not sunk in the west before a burning fever took possession of Mother Bourgeoys and racking pain tortured her frail body. For twelve long days, she gave a living example of how sickness may be made an instrument of grace

and holiness. A time of trial to weak souls, when vigilance and mortification are either relaxed or set aside, when faults abound and graces are squandered, it is, for the strong and perfect, the best season for storing vast treasures of merit.

Such it was for our heroine. The fortitude which had upborne her in so many trying moments did not fail her now. Submissive to God's Will and obedient to her superiors, she endured with patient sweetness pangs that often wrung from her involuntary cries of distress and accepted without protest all the irksome remedies prescribed for her relief. Never a murmur or complaint passed her lips, never a quiver of irritation or peevishness ruffled the serenity of her countenance. When the pain was at its high tide, she would, like Job, bless the name of the Lord, and, when too weak to sing His praises, she called upon her Sisters to do it for her. Then would the infirmary seem truly like the antechamber of Heaven, as its walls re-echoed hymns of joy and thanksgiving. Sweeter far in the ear of God were the throbbings of the faithful heart that counted it a privilege to suffer for Him even to the end.

The infirmarian noticed that, not satisfied with the constant pains of illness, Mother Bourgeois sought to add to them voluntary mortifications, remaining for a long time in a constrained position and denying herself the slightest alleviation. She

gently reproved her, and the dying religious instantly desisted, joyously exchanging bodily penance for the harder and more meritorious renunciation of her own will.

In the midst of her sufferings, though her heart already lived more in heaven than on earth, Margaret was still a careful and devoted Mother. When the grief-stricken sisters gathered around her, she forgot weariness and pain, and expended the last remnant of her failing strength, speaking to them words of counsel and encouragement. She especially urged them never to give up the Sodality of Our Lady of Victory, founded in the early days of the Community when its only home was a stable. Her keen eyes gauged all the good to be accomplished by such a foundation, and she desired to ensure its stability.\* Knowing how rapidly the number of pupils had already increased and how inadequate was the accommodation provided for them, she, with all her usual clear-sighted prudence, advised her daughters to seize the first favorable opportunity to enlarge their classes and the rooms set aside for nuns and resident pupils.

When she began to speak of spiritual things a new light shone in her eyes and a new strength came into her voice. Fidelity to duty, to charity, to penance

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\* Circumstances obliged the Congregation though very reluctantly, to relinquish the direction of this old and useful sodality.



and prayer; fidelity to rule, which is the bulwark of religious life, the safeguard of its virtues, the surest and safest way to perfection — such was the theme of her most pleading, most inspired exhortations. Straight from the heart came the burning words, and they went deep into the inmost souls of her hearers. When her voice died away into silence, the very sight of her patient suffering and unbroken union with God taught the same lessons with equal force.

Then came the day when Mother Bourgeois was to receive the solemn rites by which Holy Church prepares all her children, from pope to beggar, from saint to criminal, for the dread passage to eternity. The heart-broken community knelt around her bed like children around that of a dying parent. Tears flowed fast as they joined their prayers to those of the priest, while the blessed oil touched the pure and mortified senses of the holy nun, removing whatever stains human frailty might have left there during the course of even such a life as hers had been. With what celestial joy she then, for the last time, beheld the God of Heaven coming to her under the Eucharistic veil, and received into her heart Him who was so soon to judge and reward her!

The 12th of January, 1700, also the twelfth day of Margaret's illness, was to be the saddest ever known in Our Lady's Congregation. In the morning her more labored breathing and the drops of

sweat that beaded her cold brow, showed that her agony had begun. It lasted, like her Lord's three long hours! Then perfect peace fell upon her like a ray of light celestial; a slight tremor passed through her limbs, her pale lips parted softly, one long gentle sigh passed through them—and with that breath her soul left its earthly dwelling and returned to its Creator. Many and rare had been the talents confided to her, and she had not buried them. Not alone pure and intact did she return them to the Giver, but fostered, expanded, multiplied by unswerving fidelity to grace and heroic generosity in sacrifice.

Scarce had death stilled the beatings of her loving heart when her countenance became transfigured. The wanness of austerity and disease, the lines traced by time and care, the alteration wrought by physical pain—all were suddenly removed as when the artist effaces some unsightly detail from the freshly covered canvas. A wonderful serenity, a divine effulgence shone out upon that still face, and the orphaned Community stayed its tears to rejoice at the glory of which this seemed a pale reflection. It had lost a wise and loving mother, but had it not gained instead a powerful Advocate, a devoted Protectress, who could, more potently than ever, plead for it before God's throne?

Then it was that Sister Charly, now well and strong, begged to take her benefactress' name, and

be called henceforth Sœur Catherine du St. Sacrement; the very fact of bearing Mother Bourgeoys' name being a powerful incentive to give to God worthy proofs of her gratitude.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

A PEOPLE'S GRATITUDE — THE LAST TRIBUTE —  
GLORIFIED BY GOD AND MAN — MARGARET  
BOURGEOYS' INSTITUTE — A PARTING GLANCE —  
HEROINE AND APOSTLE — HER CHILDREN'S  
PRAYER.

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**W**HEN Margaret Bourgeoys' mortal remains had been prepared for burial, they were placed in the Congregation church. The news of her death spread rapidly throughout the town and its environs. Deep and true was the grief that fell on every heart, for few there were who had not, directly or indirectly, derived some advantage from Mother Bourgeoys' presence. Her influence, her teaching, the labors of her daughters by her inspired and guided, the very sight of her wonderful virtues — all these gave her a claim to the love, admiration and gratitude of her fellow-men.

They were not slow to recognize their indebtedness. Crowds flocked to the church to look upon her face, to pray beside her coffin, or, if they might be so privileged, to touch her hands or even her dress with beads, medals, etc. which would ever after be cherished as relics. Several apparently

miraculous cures were effected, which we shall not here detail. \*

While throngs passed in and out of the taper-lit church, bearing away the memory of that beautiful marble-like countenance, so radiant in its perfect peace, preparations were being made for the obsequies. For awhile it remained uncertain whether the Seminary or the Congregation would possess our heroine's remains. It was decided after some discussion that her body should rest in the Parish church, and her heart should be left with those it had cherished so fondly. There would it ever preach a silent lesson of virtue and fidelity.

The funeral took place in the Parish church on the 13th of January. Never before had so magnificent a ceremony been celebrated there. Every class of society was represented in the densely crowded church. Poor and rich, from the lowliest Indian convert to the Governor General of Canada,† each and all came to pay the last tribute of love and respect. One of the priests present at the memorable function, writes to a friend the same day: "Never were there so many priests and religious in the Ville-Marie church as came there this morning to assist at Mother Bourgeoys' funeral. The multitude of people was extraordinary. Were the saints

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\* *Vie de la Sœur M. Bourgeoys*, 1818, p. 169.

† Then Mr. le Chevalier de Callières.

canonized as readily as of old, tomorrow priests would say the Mass of St. Margaret of Canada."\*

Dollier de Casson, Vicar-General of the Diocese and Superior of the Seminary, who had known Mother Bourgeoys intimately and honored her greatly, pronounced the funeral oration. The aged priest, bent under the weight of four score years of life and labor, paid a heartfelt tribute to Margaret's rare virtues and exhorted her daughters of Our Lady's Congregation to keep her spirit alive within them, whether as individuals or as a religious community.

When the soul-stirring notes of the grand liturgical prayers for the departed had died away into silence, the venerable body was borne to the entrance of a chapel commonly called "Chapelle de la Sainte Vierge," where the nuns had their place of burial. The last impressive ceremony was performed by Rev. René de Breslay, P. S. S., grand-nephew of Mgr. René de Breslay, who was Bishop of Troyes when Margaret was baptized in 1620. Dollier de Casson had ordered the following epitaph to be engraved on a tablet of steel placed on the coffin:

"Here lies Sister Margaret Bourgeoys, Teacher,  
Foundress and First Superior of the Congrégation de Notre Dame established in the

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\* Faillon, *Vie de la Sœur M. Bourgeoys*, Vol. II. p. 86.

Island of Montreal for the instruction of girls in town or country, deceased on the 12th of January, 1700.

Pray for the repose of her soul!"

On the thirtieth day after Margaret's death, another solemn ceremony took place — this time in the Congregation church. Mother Bourgeoys' heart, embalmed and placed in a leaden box, had been, since the time of her demise, an object of veneration, to nuns and people. It was now to be laid in a permanent resting-place. A solemn Requiem Mass was chanted, M. de Belmont delivering an eloquent panegyric\* and once again priests and people flocked to the ceremony. At the end of Mass the heart-shaped box, which had been placed under a white veil in the nave of the church, was solemnly carried by Father de Belmont to a niche prepared for it. After incensing and blessing the shrine, he placed the box within it, and closed the opening with a leaden slab, over which lay a copper tablet bearing the following lines:

"Beneath this stone is hid a heart  
To flesh a foe, from earth apart,  
Its treasure sole, the virgin band  
Its zeal had gathered in this land."

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\* This beautiful discourse may be read in Faillon's *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, Vol. II., p. 88.

When the clergy had withdrawn, Mother Bourgeoys' portrait was hung over the shrine. Things remained thus until the 11th of April, 1768, when, a fire having consumed both church and convent during the night, all feared that the precious relic was lost forever. The following day it was seen that, though the flames had died out all around, they were still burning in the hollow of the stone niche, and blood seemed to be trickling down the wall. The sisters in astonishment sent news of the marvellous occurrence to the Seminary, and Father Favard, the convent chaplain, came himself to see if their statements were accurate. Gathering up the blood-soaked ashes, he placed them in a silver box which has been kept to this day.\*

When Margaret Bourgeoys had passed away, France and Canada united in praising her. In the writings of the period may be found the most eloquent tributes, especially in the letters of condolence written to the Congregation. Among them may be mentioned those from Mgr. de Laval, Mgr. de Saint-Vallier, M. Demaizerets, Superior of the Quebec Seminary; Rev. Father Bouvard, Superior of the Jesuits; and many others. All express respect and admiration for her who so truly realized the type of the perfect woman as set forth in the inspired words of Holy Writ.

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\* *Vie de la Sœur Marguerite Bourgeoys*, 1818, p. 173.



God himself glorified his handmaid by the numberless favors, spiritual and temporal, obtained through Mother Bourgeoys' intercession. Novenas in her honor have been productive of the most extraordinary graces, for she is honored and invoked throughout North America by her daughters, and by the pupils trained in their houses.

When several remarkable cures had followed the application of dust from Mother Bourgeoys' grave, confidence in her intercession became still more general. Great were the rejoicings when on the 7th of December, 1878, a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites declared Margaret Bourgeoys Venerable. This event occurred in the opening year of the glorious pontificate of Leo XIII. It is the cherished hope of Mother Bourgeoys' daughters and clients, as of all Canadians and Catholics, that his successor will soon exalt our heroine's life, name and mission by granting her the crowning honors of beatification and canonization. How joyfully and confidently will they then invoke the beloved name of "Saint Margaret of Canada!"

Under the patronage of Mary, its Queen, and of its saintly Foundress, the *Congrégation de Notre Dame* has spread and flourished in a truly remarkable way. Trials have not been lacking to prove its strength and add to its merits. Again and again has fire spent all its fury on different houses. In

1683, 1768 and 1893, disastrous conflagrations destroyed the successive Mother-Houses, and many of the most valuable historical records. The opening years of the twentieth century find Ven. Mother Bourgeoys' Institute full of life, strength and activity. Its Constitutions have been definitely approved by the Holy See. It numbers 127 establishments scattered through twenty-one dioceses, 1400 religious, and 32,000 pupils.

We have, step by step, followed Margaret Bourgeoys from Troyes to Ville-Marie, and even to the perfect accomplishment of her life-work. A stranger no longer, she is to us now as one whom we have met and loved, and with whom we have dwelt a brief space in the very intimacy of her thoughts and feelings. The time has come to leave her, but that hour of intercourse will surely, with God's blessing, leave behind it an uplifting and stimulating influence.

"Our heroine" we have called Margaret Bourgeoys more than once, and a heroine we have found her to be on more than one occasion. Yet, when we look deep down into her soul, the word "apostle" seems to become her even better. The true apostle's generosity consists not only in spending for others time, and care, and health; these are but external things. It consists in giving what is the best part of self, and will live forever; mind and heart. The former gifts Margaret gave lavishly, nor did she

selfishly withhold the riches of her rare intelligence and warm heart, since by spending both, she became a teacher, an educator, a benefactress for all time to her adopted country. The most correct picture we can bear in mind of this noble religious is that of a truly "womanly" woman, true and loyal and kind, who loved God with all her heart, and who loved the poor, the weak and the ignorant with a tender, active love, in God and for God.

JANUARY 12, 1906.

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PRAYER.

O JESUS, Lover of souls and Source of all holiness, we pray Thee to glorify Thy servant, Margaret Bourgeois, that hearing her proclaimed Blessed by thy Vicar on earth, the hearts of her daughters, overflowing with joy, may pour forth their tribute of gratitude to Heaven. Thus, their hopes being realized, they will repeat the hymn of praise first sung by Thy Holy Mother: "My soul doth magnify the Lord because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid and He hath done in her great things." Amen.







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